

ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION IN THE
CHURCH IN A POSTMODERN
CULTURE

by

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ABSTRACT

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Through the use of sociology, anthropology, psychology, and theology, a methodology was developed for engaging the next generation within the church using a phenomenological qualitative research design. Brentwood Baptist Church in Houston Texas was used to address the diminishing presence of the next generation within a post-modern culture. The objective was to reverse the trend of the diminishing presence of the next generation at Brentwood Baptist Church. The hypothesis was, when the church places an emphasis on preaching and teaching foundational biblical truths, young adults will respond positively and become more involved in the Church. The project was successful.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Alexandria Grace Ford. It was through this project that I realized the gravity of Grace. Grace goes beyond human comprehension. It is a gift from God; underserved, unwarranted, never ending, and it is all that you will ever need. Know that you are a gift from God. Always keep Him first.

PREFACE

Statistic shows the church is lacking those who would be considered a part of the next-generation. More than any other generation before their time, the next-generation have separated themselves from the institutional church. Those who consider themselves a part of the group known as the nones, or those without religious affiliation, are steadily growing. The church has reason to be concerned with this growing trend. The church of Christ will stand until Jesus returns, the trend of the next-generation will certainly have a great impact on the vitality of the church in years to come.

This work was birthed out of the writer's own ministry. An ordained minister in the Baptist Church, the writer has worked with youth and young adults in various capacities his entire life. Contrary to statistics the writer argues the next generation is yearning for the church to create a place for them. This group more often than not is overlooked. Ministries are put into place for children, youth, men, and women but not much emphasis is placed on those between the ages of twenty through thirty-nine years of age. Many churches have resigned to believe this age group will always be missing from the church. This writer believes the church has a great opportunity to really capture and reclaim them through sound biblical preaching and teaching by placing emphasis on them.

A part of the next-generation myself, I have a great love for the church and passion for this generation. Through this piece, I hope to enlighten those in ministry on how to more effectively reach the next generation.

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, the 21st Century has presented the church with a number of challenges, most noticeably is the declining attendance of the next generation.¹ There are many factors, which contribute to the delinquency of the next generation within the church. This project will endeavor to address the diminishing presence of the next generation within the confines of the church. This research hypothesizes, when the church places an emphasis on the next generation and its preaching and teaching is on foundational biblical truths, the next generation will respond positively and become more involved in the church.

Chapter one of the study will ground itself within the contemporary context of Brentwood Baptist Church and will explore how this particular project was birthed out of my experiences in ministry. This chapter will seek to give insight into my spiritual autobiography and background information on the context. Lastly, the synergy between my spiritual autobiography and context will be articulated. It is from this synergy that this project was birthed.

Chapter two will explore what leading professionals have to say in regards to the diminishing presence of the next generation within the church. Dialogue will ensue with those in the fields of sociology, psychology, and anthropology in order to get a holistic view of the next generation and the factors confronting this generation. From this

¹Next Generation is defined in this project to mean persons between the ages of eighteen and thirty-nine years of age.

dialogue should emerge a methodology for dealing with the concerns of this current generation.

Chapter three will examine how the diminishing presence of the next generation in church has been explored biblically, historically, and theologically. Old and New Testament scripture will be used to give evidence of how young people were treated biblically. Next, the challenges of theologians Martin Luther and Dietrich Bonhoeffer will be examined. Finally, this chapter will explore how the church fathers view the church and its impact on the present day.

In chapter four, the research design model will be discussed. The hypothesis will be restate and spell out exactly how it will be tested using data triangulation.

Chapter five will consist of the actual field experience. It will include the collection and analysis of data and the project outcomes. Chapter five will indicate the effectiveness of the project. Did the project yield the expected results?

The final chapter, chapter six will be set aside for reflection, summery, and conclusion of the project. In this chapter the researcher will give his concluding thoughts and how the project could possibly be built upon.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The conversion experience is the pivotal point in any Christian's life. Most of the time we hear stories of people who have had an experience like Paul on the road of Damascus: men and women who have lead riotous lives and one day find the Lord. This is not my story. I was blessed to grow up in a God-fearing environment. Both of my parents were the products of the church. They met while at a state convention as they were both representing their church for their youth departments. They served in ministry together and they raised my siblings and I children in the church by their side and in their examples.

My earliest memories were of my father working as the Director of Christian Education and Family Life at a fairly large church in Detroit, Michigan. There he was in charge of designing and implementing programs for the community. Though work consumed much of his time, he never let it get in the way of the time he spent with his family; most of the time they were at the church with him participating in ministry.

For our family, church was more than a Sunday morning experience—it was a way of life. Our lives centered on our church community. Our church was a tight-knit group that was more like a big family. In fact, many of the members were referred to as uncle, aunt, grandma, Nanna, or other names, which further illustrated a close familial bond. As with any family this church had its issues, but the love they had for each other

was far greater than any problem they may have encountered. The church took to heart the old African Proverb that it takes a village to raise a child. The church and the people involved with the ministry constantly invested in their youth. There was almost always something going on for the young people in the church. Between the basketball and bowling leagues, summer camps, and lock-ins, the church made a concerted effort to impact the community for the better through the different programs they provided for the youth. It was these experiences, which help to shape and form my view of ministry. Through the example of my father and church, I learned that we could not fully live out our faith in isolation. Practicing our faith is as much as a community effort as it is an individual effort. It is only as we interact and commune with those who share our faith do we begin to grow and mature in Christ.

After serving as the Christian Educator and Family Life minister for a number of years, my father was called to a small church in Ontario, Canada. Over the next eleven years the family found itself in transition uniting with five different ministries before joining with a church in Metuchen, New Jersey. For me, this was difficult. I faced each move with anxiety not knowing what to expect. How would I adjust? What would I find at the new church? These are all questions, which I struggled with as I tried to make sense out of things. More than anything I longed to find a place of stability where I would not have to worry about the next move.

In the midst of moving from one ministry to the next, I was diagnosed with having a Slipped Bilateral Capitulum Femoral Epiphysis. For a number of months, I had been having unexplained pain in my groin area. Originally, doctors thought it was just a pulled muscle, which was understandable given how active I was. An avid sports player,

I was, at the time, in the middle of the basketball season. I knew I was going to be the next Mugsy Bogues. Between basketball, tennis, and football sports consumed my life. Church was good, and I enjoyed it, but sports had become my life. Though I did not realize it, sports had become like a mini god to me. My world evolved around sports.

I was eventually referred to an Orthopedist. The doctor informed my family and me that my bones were not growing at the same rate as my body. Due to a growth spurt, the thighbone was disconnecting from my hip. The solution would be surgery. The doctor informed me that I needed to have screws put into my hip to keep the bones from separating completely. If I did not do so, there was a great chance that I would become paralyzed. The screw would fix the problem, but it would also close up the growth plates. I was already short and I thought the doctor was joking about my having a growth spurt. I was only 5'2 and a half and I had always been the shortest in his class. Now there would be no possibility of getting any taller. This did not alarm me as much as the doctor's next statement. The doctor told me I would have to be on crutches until the surgery and I could not finish up the basketball season. My team had just made it to the semifinals and they had a good chance of going all the way. I was heartbroken when I found out that I would not be able to play in the game. I went to the game and sat on the bench. It was a nail biter. The game was close the whole way. In the end the opposing team won by one point. I often wondered if I had played would it have made a difference. I remembered how many of my teammates broke down after the game, but I was somewhat withdrawn. I did not have the same feelings of despair as the rest of my teammates. In fact, there was a lack of emotion on my behalf. While I would have preferred to win, I understood in the whole scheme of things this was insignificant. At the end of the day it was just a game. It

had no eternal ramifications. That day, with peace on the inside, I walked away from the game I loved.

I had the surgery and then had to go through the healing and rehab process. I would miss the rest of the school year, which I was not too disappointed about, but it gave me a lot of time to think while I was at home alone. I questioned God: why did this have to happen to me? I felt that it was unfair. I was angry. I did not know what to do. I spent a lot of time talking with God. I did not understand why this was happening, but it made me reevaluate my goals. My focus had to shift, but what would it be? The more I spoke to God during this time, the more God revealed to me that He was trying to get my attention. It was at this moment that I truly began to become serious about faith. I loved the Lord, but somewhere along the way God was put on the back burner for sports. I recommitted myself to God and told Him whatever He would have me to do, I would do.

It was at the church in Metuchen that my Christian development was nurtured. I soon found myself teaching the youth Sunday school class and new member's classes. I was active in the men's ministry at the church and often spoke at their breakfasts. I became a junior deacon at the church in Metuchen. I really began to focus on what it meant to do ministry. I was beginning to find myself and understand the purpose God had for my life. At the age of sixteen, while at a men's retreat, I approached my pastor and told him I felt that God was calling me to preach, but I was struggling with the call. I had so many reasons why I felt I could not follow the call: I was too young, I was only in high school, I did not know what I was doing, and more. My pastor told me he was not surprised. He had been watching me and already knew God was calling me to ministry.

My pastor also understood my hesitancy because of the enormity of the call. I felt much better after talking to my pastor. It was as if a weight had been lifted off of me.

A year passed and I was still struggling with my call. I continued working in ministry; I was even leading a before school Bible study for students, but I purposely avoided speaking any further about my call. I told God that once I graduated from high school, I would answer the call on my life. I just was not ready yet. Almost immediately after the conversation with God, my pastor asked if he could meet with me. I was very reluctant to go because I knew exactly what he wanted. I eventually mustered up enough courage to go and meet with him. He began by saying that over a year had passed since I initially spoke to him about my call. Since that time I had not said anything else to him. I responded, "I know." My pastor told me that I could not run from God. He told me he had been watching me over the course of the past year and he knew this was what God had for me. Just before the meeting was over my pastor told me that he would give me until I graduated to make my decision. He then told me to pray about it. Immediately I was convicted because my pastor repeated back to me the very words I told God. I went home that night and found myself restless. I did not want to pray because I already knew the answer and he did not like it.

More than anything, I wanted to be a normal teenager. It seemed as if God would not let him go. I began to think about all the fun I thought I would miss out on and all the trouble I wanted to get into, anticipating my newly found freedom as a college student. The very same night, I decided to stop fighting and told God, whatever God would have me to do, I would do. I could no longer wait until I graduated high school. The next day, I had to tell my pastor that I was ready to surrender to God's will.

Not long after I accepted my call to ministry, my father was called to pastor a church in a neighboring community. Once again, the family was about to transition from one ministry to another ministry. However, I felt that God still had work for me to do at New Hope. This was one of the hardest decisions I ever had to make: Should I go with my family to this new assignment or should I stay back and continue working in ministry at my current church? It was not an easy decision because I still lived under my parents' roof; I looked up to my parents, and we had always served in ministry together. As difficult as it was, I told my parents that I believed the Lord was leading me to stay at New Hope. Though they were very disappointed, they said they understood. I knew this hurt my dad to the core. It hurt me as well, but I knew this was God's will. My dad, mom, brother, and sister went to their next assignment and I stayed behind. It was difficult at first, but I supposed it was much like how the disciples felt when Jesus told them to drop their nets, leave their family, and follow Him.

I was excited about my call. Whenever my pastor was at the church, I was there and I did not leave until he was ready to go home. I went with my pastor to every preaching engagement and I constantly observed him. Many of the lessons about ministry I learned came from watching my pastor and asking questions about what I had seen long after everyone was gone.

Not long after I was licensed to preach, my pastor asked me to represent the church at a local association meeting. I had no idea what it was about, but I went to be obedient. Being the youngest in the room, not knowing anyone, and not knowing what I was doing there in the first place, I sat in the back. The moderator began the meeting stating that he was reorganizing the Congress of Christian Education of the local

association. He spotted me in the back of the room and asked for the name of my church. The moderator then asked if I would come take a seat next to him in the front. Reluctantly, I did as I was requested. At some point in the meeting the moderator turned to me and said he wanted me to serve as his Second Vice President for the Congress. I had no experience and felt inadequate to take on the position, but at the urging of the moderator, I agreed. I went back and told my pastor what transpired. My pastor told me it was a great opportunity. All of a sudden, I found myself deep into ministry. Overnight, it seemed like I went from being a regular high school student to accepting my call to the preaching ministry to serving as the youth minister at my church and holding a position in the local association. Truthfully, I had no clue what He was doing, but God graced me with the ability to learn as I went. I was blessed because I had a number of pastors who invested in my ministry, and me at an early age.

I entered college and my ministry continued to grow. I successfully balanced ministry and school. The youth ministry at the church was growing and I was being asked to preach all over New Jersey for youth days. I served as Second Vice President for the Congress of the local association, and was even leading workshops for youth and youth workers for the General Baptist State Convention of New Jersey. One of my greatest honors was being asked to preach at the age of eighteen for the general session for the General Baptist State Convention congress. God was truly blessing my ministry.

In 2006, I graduated college, and there was no question of whether or not I would go to seminary. My pastor insisted that a call to ministry was, first, a call to preparation. One of the first papers I had to write upon entering seminary was on Jeremiah 20. I felt it would be an easy task. I heard the text preached a number of times, and I thought I had a

good understanding of the text. I began to write about how Jeremiah's love for God compelled him to want to tell everyone. I turned in my paper thinking I had done a great job, and my professor returned the paper and told me to try again. She told me that there was more to the text. She even suggested that Jeremiah was not prophesying by his own free will, but God was forcing him to do so. My first thought was that this professor was crazy. God would never force anyone to do something they did not want to do. God was a loving God, a kind God, and a merciful God. This God was almost antithetical to the God who I knew. Though uncomfortable, seminary was beginning to stretch me theologically. I was beginning to wrestle with ideas and themes, which I had for so long taken for granted and understood to be true.

I reexamined my paper and the more I studied the passage and read different material, the more I realized that sometimes, God forces humanity to act against their will to achieve His plans. I began to understand sometime you do not have a choice what you will and will not say as it relates to God. This paper was a growing experience for me. In retrospect it helped me understand my own life. I could identify with Jeremiah. It was not my choice to have to move so many times growing up, rather it was because of the demands of ministry and God compelling my family. It was not even my choice to accept my call into ministry. God had already preordained that I would be a prognosticator of the Gospel. His calling was one that I could not run away from no matter how much I tried. I began to understand that my life was not my own. God's purpose for my life superseded my will.

I had always been a great student. All throughout my academic career I had breezed through school with very little difficulty. Seminary, however, was not quite the

same. It challenged me and made me question much of what I thought I learned in church. Before, I was able to excel with minimal effort, but now I had to learn how to study and really read. The first semester I struggled to make C's. I hated seminary and I did not want to be there anymore. I saw other people leaving; however, I felt like I did not have a choice. I could not drop out and return home because so many people had invested in me and were counting on me. I could not see myself going forward in the program because I felt inadequate and that even if I tried, I would fail. I began to talk to God and told Him how much I hated being at the seminary. I told God that if it were my choice I would leave. I continued by acknowledging that God must have me there for a reason. I then said God would have to help me out because as it stood, there was no way I would be able to complete seminary without the help of the Lord. With that, I had a new determination.

Though I struggled through my classes, God proved faithful, and I completed my first semester. I went into my second semester encouraged by my accomplishments. I vowed to continue to work hard throughout seminary. However, the demands of being the youth pastor, working as the afterschool director at the YMCA, as well as preaching and doing seminars across New Jersey pulled at me and took my attention away from school. This most likely helped to contribute to my problems the first semester.

Early within the second semester, I was confronted with a situation that was life-altering. My pastor called and told me he needed to speak to me about a couple of the youth. One of the youth workers had found a picture of a girl kissing another girl on Facebook and they said I knew about it since I was on Facebook. I explained to him I had no knowledge of the incident. It is true, I checked the youth's Facebook pages, but after a

previous incident with the same individual where I brought the information to the parents' attention, the parents made the youth shut down her page. I did not know this particular person even had a page anymore and I had followed protocol involving the previous incident.

My pastor asked me to look into the incident and told me he wanted to meet him with the parents of the individual. I did as requested. I accessed the young lady's account through a mutual friend's page and printed up the pictures for the meeting with my pastor and the parents of the young lady. The parent held prominent positions in the church. They denied any knowledge of the incident and soon turned their anger to me. They felt I had no right monitoring their child or bringing this information to them. I could not believe it. I felt hurt and betrayed by the parents. I thought parents should want to know what their children were doing. I also felt abandoned by my pastor. The youth worker who told my pastor that I had knowledge of it hurt me. I trusted her. It hurt and troubled me that my pastor thought I would withhold this type of information from him. I had spent all of his time and energy investing in other people's children and, in an instant; it felt like they turned on him. I left the church that day and headed back to school, discouraged, and disappointed. That week while working at the YMCA, I severely sprained my ankle. I went to the emergency room and they placed it in a medical boot. I used my foot as an excuse to miss church for the next two Sundays. I needed sometime for myself. During this time, I never called or told anyone at the church why I was out. It was unusual for me not to be in contact with the church especially for such a long period.

Upon my return to church, my pastor asked to meet with me. He reprimanded me for being away for the two weeks without any form of communication. He then relieved

me of some of my duties as youth pastor and told me I needed to concentrate more on school. While the latter portion of the statement was true, it still hurt because youth ministry was all he knew. I felt like he was losing a piece of himself. I knew that call needed to be made, but I could not separate myself from ministry. I felt the only reason why his pastor made the decision was because of the situation with the youth. I blamed the parents of the youth, whom I had informed about their children per his predicament. Other than ministry, I had nothing else to show for myself. I defined myself by my ministry. I looked at the church differently. I did not want to be at that church anymore, but God had not yet released me. I continued to do youth workshops and preach across the state, but it was painful for me to go to my church on Sunday and worship with people who I felt had turned on me. I stopped participating in the daily activities of the church. Sunday would be the only day I gave to church. I would attend to the needs of my pastor and preach when asked; preaching, however even became a chore. I decided to have minimal interaction with anyone at the church other than the pastor.

That summer, I needed to do field education for school. Originally, I wanted to stay in New Jersey, but my initial placement fell through and after all that transpired, I felt it might be best to get away. Many of my friends were doing their field education in Houston, Texas and so I asked my advisor if there were any churches in Houston that were available. My advisor gave me the name of a church. He said the church was missing the information for the pastor in the school's database. After looking at the name of the church, I quickly responded with the name of the pastor. My advisor googled the church and confirmed the name of the pastor. I knew of the pastor in Houston because my pastor in Metuchen constantly talked about the pastor's preaching and the ministry.

The sister of my pastor at one point belonged to the church in Houston and the pastor had made a profound impact on my pastor the one time he visited. This is where I needed to go.

I consulted my pastor about the prospect of doing an internship in Houston. My pastor thought it was a great choice. I pursued and obtained the internship. It was a great experience. It was a time of renewal and revival for me. While I worked hard during my internship, I also learned the importance of balance in ministry. I learned I was more than just his ministry. I learned how to enjoy life and ministry at the same time. The church showed me the importance of taking time for myself. The pastor gave me tickets to different events and encouraged me to explore Houston. I was learning what it meant to have a social life. Before, church consumed me so that I never thought about anything other church. Now I had become a regular at one of the local jazz establishments downtown. My friends and I often scheduled mini day trips over the weekend to explore other parts of the state. I was learning how not to take life so serious. While drive and ambition was important, I began to understand the importance of enjoying the ride as I move toward my destination. Another intern introduced me to a young lady who was also in Houston interning at a church. The three spent most of the summer together. Many days I came into work deprived from hanging out all night with them. The three of us soon became two. The young lady and I began going out more and more without the other intern. At first, our relationship was platonic. I was not looking for a girlfriend and the last thing the young lady wanted was to date was a preacher. She verbalized it often and reminded me of it on a number of occasions.

In Houston, I learned how to truly live, and my love for ministry was reignited. I had my passion back. The sermons, which the pastor preached Sunday after Sunday, were ministering to me in light of what I had experienced at my church back home. The summer was coming to an end and I would soon have to return to school and my church. I dreaded going back to both. I felt I had found my place in Houston. Before my departure, the pastor asked me if I would be interested in coming back the next summer to create a job description for when I graduated. Without hesitation I said, "yes." I enjoyed my final days in Houston before returning to New Jersey.

Just before I was ready to return to New Jersey I made plans to meet with the female intern who I had spent much of the summer with for breakfast. She brought her best friend to the restaurant with her. Just before we left, the young lady's friend told me to keep in contact with her friend because there was something different about me. I said I would. The next day, I drove back to New Jersey from Texas. The entire trip back, I spoke to the young lady on the phone. She wanted to make sure that I returned home safely. I knew then this was the young lady for me.

Every day, we would talk on the phone for hours at a time. Eventually, I told the young lady how I felt, and she admitted that she too had the same feelings. The next month, she and her best friend flew to New Jersey to visit me and the other intern who introduced us in Houston. I took her to meet my pastor and my parents. My parents and pastor knew this was serious because I had never introduced anyone to them. We would take turns visiting each other over the course of the school year.

I returned to school and my church and while I was in a better place, I still had not fully dealt with my issues at the church. I still held a lot of resentment. I spent a month

back in Metuchen before my yearlong internship started at a church in Union, New Jersey. Because of my internship, I did not have to deal with feelings of mistreatment by the church. While I would keep in contact with my pastor, I very rarely would have anything to do with the church body. Occasionally, I would go to support my pastor at afternoon services, but I was very cautious about being friendly with anyone else.

Upon returning to school, challenges still plagued me academically. While I was beginning adjust to seminary, the school was not very affirming about the contributions the Black church had to offer to the church in general. It was almost as if my culture and our experiences were negligible. I encountered professors who could not explain why they gave me certain grades and it seemed as if they did not take time to even read my papers.

One incident in particular remains at the forefront of my memory. The professor gave me a C on an assignment. When I asked the professor why he received a C, the professor could not answer. He asked if I could give him a week to read the paper, and he would get back to me. I waited for a response from the professor but never received one. After three weeks, I approached the professor and demanded an explanation. I felt this was some of my best work, but I had scored lower this time on my paper than any other paper I had written. The professor looked over the paper and said in a surprising manner that the paper was actually very good. He proceed to change the grade from a C to an A, then he responded he did not remember how tough he was in grading the other students papers so he gave me a B. This was demoralizing for me. It showed me no matter how hard I worked, the chance that I would be given a fair opportunity was slim, and color was still an issue. I would always be at a disadvantage because I was black. I walked

around campus with this weighing on me. More and more, I noticed the cynical behavior of not only staff, but other white students towards minorities. The incident only exacerbated the fact that I did not want to be there.

One day, an African American professor stopped me on my way to lunch. The professor introduced himself to me. I did not know the professor but I recognized his name. The professor had been on a sabbatical the year before and was just returning. He asked me why I had such a long face and seemed so gloomy. I told him how I felt and why. The professor confirmed my suspicions about the school, but told me not to let it discourage me. He told me the Presbyterian Church was losing members at an alarming rate. He then affirmed the African American Church having something positive to add to the religious dialogue. Unlike the Presbyterian Church, they were prospering. He concluded, in light of the current condition of the church, the African American church was not only relevant, but others could learn from them. This encouraged me and helped me maintain my course. I then looked for every opportunity possible to take classes with this professor. If a class did not exist, I would apply for an independent study under this professor's tutelage. The more time I spent with my professor, the more I excelled academically.

At the end of the school year, I returned to the church in Houston for another internship. My girlfriend had just graduated seminary and she was offered a job in Houston as Director of Christian Education for a church. When we were not at work, we spent all of our time together. We both knew it was right.

I began to process some of my pain. I was not ready to talk openly about my particular situation, but I began to inquire of the pastor in Houston as to how does one

effectively minister to those who have hurt him/her. I did not understand how I could continue to try to help those who tried to hurt me. I did not understand how I could genuinely be concerned for the well being of individuals who were not concerned about me. The pastor in Houston told me many times the ministers becomes the wounded healer. It is through personal pain the minister identifies and is able to minister to others and relate to them that Jesus is a liberator from all of their hang-ups. I also began to inform my girlfriend about what happened at my home church. The more I talked, the better I felt. Though I had not fully dealt with everything, I was on the road to recovery.

That summer, the pastor in Houston talked with me about areas I would be interested in working in at the church. I new right away that technology would likely be one of the areas I would like to concentrate on because part of my assignment for the summer was helping with the new website design. The pastor asked what other areas I was interested in, giving me the choice between singles and young adults or youth ministry. Still broken, I did not want to have anything to do with youth ministry and so I chose singles and young adults. The pastor in Houston called my pastor in New Jersey and told him he would like to hire me fulltime when I graduated. The pastor in Metuchen gave the pastor in Houston his blessing. I was elated I had the support of my pastor back home. My pastor played such an important role in my development as a minister that I would always be indebted to him. I knew the importance of submitting to my pastor. I realized that though my gift exposed me to some opportunities, God rewards those who honor and submit to spiritual authority. I understood that many of the blessings and opportunities I received, were because of my faithfulness and obedience to my pastor. As the summer neared an end, I prepared to return to seminary to finish my last year. Before

I was due to leave, I visited my girlfriend at her church and proposed to her. She said “yes.” I left and headed back to school with a job when I graduated and a fantastic personal future ahead since I was engaged to a beautiful young lady. I returned to New Jersey and my church and was able to function much better. My pastor admitted that his decision to relieve me of some of my duties were because of pressure he received from others, mainly, the parents whose children were involved in the incident as well as another minister who wanted to be youth pastor. I told him that it needed to be done so that I could concentrate on school. The pastor asked me would I be willing to start working more with the youth again. The minister who took charge of the ministry had not done anything with it and the ministry was suffering. The minister left the church and now the youth ministry was left without leadership. I declined stating I thought it was best if I continued to focus on my last year in seminary. I did agree to preach for Youth Sunday for the remainder of the academic year.

I completed seminary in May of 2009 with my Masters of Divinity. A day after my last final, I was on a plane to Houston, Texas. The next day, I was in the office of my pastor in Houston exchanging wedding vows with my fiancé. While the two would have a large wedding with all their family and friends in October, they did not want to wait to get married. I soon began working fulltime at the church as the Minister of Young Adults and Singles. In my position I would be tasked with translating my life of transition into ministry, bridging the gap between an older aging congregation and a new generation. While the church had a sizable young adult presence in the general congregation, those engaged in ministry outside of Sunday worship, were few. My experience of transition would help me identify with those who I would be ministering to. I would encounter

those whose lives were characterized by transition; young men and women who were transitioning from living at home with their parents to living on their own. I would encounter those who were going from high school to college and from college to the workforce. I would also encounter those who were planning to transition from being single to married, and those who were married to being widowed or divorced. I would encounter those who were starting families for the first time. I began to understand that my calling was to teach how to actively live out our faith even in the midst of constant change and transition. All that I experienced growing up helped to prepare me for ministry.

The church has helped me obtain a more holistic view of ministry. The church was known for fighting for the disinherited and disenfranchised. They had a reputation of ministering to people on the most outer edges of society: people whom society had written off. The church in Houston was an agent of hope and a place of healing and restoration. Programs like the food pantry, cottages for men with HIV and AIDS, their clothing ministry all conveyed their concern for the less fortunate and under privileged. I enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry Degree at United not because I like school, but because I am committed to equipping myself to minister to those who like me are trying to find their way in a world plagued with transition.

I believe ministry must go beyond a Sunday morning homily; it must meet people at the point of their needs and minister to them through their hurt and brokenness. True ministry cannot be confined inside the walls of church, but must overflow into the community. The measure of ministry is not determined by how big a church is, but how great of an impact the church is having on its community. If the church is not properly

equipped to deal with the ills of society, then it has missed its purpose for existence. I believe with all of my heart that God has called me to serve for such a time as this.

Context

This section will explore the context of Brentwood Baptist Church in Houston, Texas. In an effort to give a complete depiction of its context, we will focus on the church's location within the state, county, and city before narrowing down its focus to the particular community it serves.

The United States acquired the area of Texas through annexation and Texas was admitted to the Union on December 29, 1845, as the 28th state.¹ Texas is located in the southwest portion of the United States. The state occupies just over 7% of the total land area of the US. Texas is second only to Alaska in landmass within the Union. The 2010 US census calculates Texas land area as 261,231.71 square miles. There is also an additional 7,364 square miles of water bringing the total area of Texas to 268,596 square miles.² Four states border Texas. These States include Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. Texas also shares an international board with Mexico that extends 1,241 miles.³

Texas has twenty-five metropolitan statistical areas, forty-four micropolitan statistical areas, two metropolitan divisions, and eight combined statistical areas. There are 254 counties in Texas. There are 862 county subdivisions in Texas. Texas has 1,752

¹"Texas Almanac," Facts, 2011, accessed November 29, 2012, <http://www.texasalmanac.Com/topics/facts-profile>.

²"Texas Almanac," Environment, 2011, accessed November 29, 2012, <http://www.texasalmanac.com/topics/environment/environment>.

³United States Census Bureau, "Texas, Guide to State and Local Census Geography," September 6, 2011, accessed November 15, 2012, http://www.census.gov/geo/www/guidestloc/st48_tx.html.

places; 1,214 incorporated places and 538 census-designated places. The incorporated places consist of 956 cities, 234 towns, and twenty-four villages. Texas is the second largest state with a population of 25,145,561. 18,279,737 are eighteen and older. 3,276,130 are sixty-two and over. Of the 25,145,561 people in Texas, 12,472,280 are male; 12,673,281 are female.⁴ The two largest races within Texas are those who consider themselves Caucasian and African American. Of the 25,145,561 people who live in Texas 18,276,506 people identifies themselves as white alone or in combination with one or more races. 3,168,469 people are identified as being solely African American or in combination of one or more races. In the same vein those who consider themselves of Hispanic or Latino origin of any race, account for 9,460,921 people or 37% of the population.

While Texas is the fifth fastest growing state, numerically Texas had the greatest numerical increase with 4,293,741 people being added to its population.⁵ From 2000 to 2010, Texas has more than doubled the national population growth experiencing a 20.6% growth in population. In comparison, the United States reports its population growth during the same time period to be 9.7%.⁶ Over the ten-year period of population growth

⁴United States, United States Census Bureau, United States Department of Commerce, Texas QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau, accessed November 30, 2012, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48000.html>.

⁵United States, United States Census Bureau, United States Department of Commerce, Population Distribution and Change: 2000 to 2010, by Paul Mackun and Steven Wilson, March 2011, accessed November 15, 2012, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-01.pdf>.

⁶"Texas Almanac," Population, accessed November 29, 2012, <http://www.texasalmanac.com/topics/population>.

those who considered themselves African American increased by 23.9%.⁷ Those who considered themselves as solely white had an increase of 4.2%.⁸ The Hispanic and Latino population increased by 20.6%.⁹ It is projected by 2023 those considering themselves of Hispanic and Latino ethnic origins will surpass those considering themselves to be Caucasian, making individuals of Hispanic and Latino origin the majority.¹⁰

In 2010-2011 Texas had 1,228 operating public school districts with a total of 4,912,385 students enrolled making it the second largest state of enrolled children in the country.¹¹ Out of the 319,588 students expected to graduate in 2011, 85.9% completed their secondary education. This number increased by 1.6% from the previous year.¹² Those who identified themselves as African American had the lowest rate of graduation at 80.9%, the Hispanic graduation rate was 81.8 and whites a rate of 92.0%. The study

⁷United States, United States Census Bureau, United States Department of Commerce, *The Black Population: 2010*, by Sonya Rastogi, Tallese D. Johnson, Elizabeth M. Hoeffel, and Malcolm P. Drewery, Jr., September 2011, accessed November 13, 2012, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-06.pdf>.

⁸United States, United States Census Bureau, United States Department of Commerce, *The White Population: 2010*, by Lindsay Hixson, Bradford B. Hepler, and Myoung Ouk Kim, September 2011, accessed November 13, 2012, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-05.pdf>.

⁹United States, United States Census Bureau, United States Department of Commerce, *The Hispanic Population: 2010*, by Sharon R. Ennis, Merarys Ríos-Vargas, and Nora G. Albert, May 2011, accessed November 13, 2012, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf>.

¹⁰"Texas Almanac," *Environment*, 2011, accessed November 29, 2012, <http://www.texasalmanac.com/topics/environment/environment>.

¹¹"Ranking & Estimates: Ranking of the States 2011 an Estimate of School Statistics 2012," *NEA_Rankings_And_Estimates_FINAL_20120209.pdf*, December 2011, accessed December 2012, http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NEA_Rankings_And_Estimates_FINAL_20120209.pdf.

¹²"Texas Education Agency," Texas Education Agency, accessed November 30, 2012, <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=2147508093>.

also shows that 83.9% of people who are considered to be economically disadvantaged graduated.¹³

According to the US census there are 15,116,371 people over 25. From that sample, 1,505,662 have less than a ninth grade education, 1,515,336 have some high school education, but no diploma, 3,928,438 are high school graduates, 3,318,190 have some college but no degree, 954,622 have an associate's degree, 2,609,718 have a Bachelor's Degree, and 1,284,405 have a graduate or professional degree.¹⁴ Those Texans who own a home are 64.8%. The median value of owner occupied homes is \$123,500. The median household income is \$49,646 and 16.8% of the population live below poverty level.¹⁵

For seventy consecutive months, the unemployment rate in Texas has been at or below the national rate of unemployment. As of October 2012, the unemployment in Texas was 6.6%. Within two years, Texas has recovered from the recession. In December 2011, Texas reported 10.65 million nonfarm workers. The state added 200,000 jobs in 2011 restoring the employment rate to pre-recession levels. Healthcare and the Social Assistance sector is the largest employer in Texas, ranking 3rd in the U.S. with 54,991

¹³United States, Texas Education Agency, Department Of Assessment And Accountability, Texas Education Agency, by Robin McMillion, Jason Ramirez, and Spring W. Lee, July 2012, accessed December 8, 2012, http://www.tea.state.tx.us/acctres/dropcomp_index.html.

¹⁴United States, United States Census Bureau, United States Department of Commerce, Texas QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau, accessed November 30, 2012, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48000.html>.

¹⁵Ibid.

establishments and 1,166,613 employees.¹⁶ Harris County has a total area of 1,778 square miles, 1729 of the total area is land with 49 square miles being surface water.¹⁷

Neighboring counties include, Montgomery County, Liberty County, Chambers County, Galveston County, Brazoria County, Fort Bend County, and Waller County. Harris County is composed of 32 cities.¹⁸ Of the 4,180,894 people that live in Harris County, 2,098,808 are female and 2,082,085 are male. Caucasians or those in some combination with them are 71.4%. Only 32.7% are identified as being Caucasians that are not Hispanic. Blacks or those in some combination with them are 19.3%. Hispanics or Latino origin of any race, account for 41.4% of the population. From the population, individuals twenty-five years or older, 77.6% are high school graduates, 27.7% have at least a bachelor's degree,¹⁹ 57.8% percent of the population owns a home and \$131,700 is the median home value. The median household income is \$51,440 and 16.8% of the population are below the poverty level.²⁰

The Houston Metro area consists of eight counties: Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery and Waller, and spans 8,778 square miles.

¹⁶Susan Combs, Economic Outlook, December 10, 2012, accessed December 10, 2012, <http://www.thetexasconomy.org/economic-outlook/>.

¹⁷"The Official Harris County, Texas Website," The Official Harris County, Texas Website, accessed December 5, 2012, <http://www.gis.hctx.net/>.

¹⁸"Harris County, Texas," History and Information, accessed December 6, 2012, <http://www.e-referencedesk.com/resources/counties/texas/harris.html>.

¹⁹United States, United States Census Bureau, United States Department of Commerce, Harris County QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau, , accessed November 30, 2012, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/48201.html>.

²⁰Ibid.

5.95 million people live within this area.²¹ The Association of Religion Data Archives estimates there are 4,638 religious institutions in this area and accounting for 3,279,316 of the population. There are 1,276 Southern Baptist Churches claiming a total membership of 831,105. The Association of Religion Data Archives also depicts there is still 2,667,484 who are unclaimed.

The city of Houston has a land area of 599.59 square miles. Houston stretches across Fort Bend, Harris, and Montgomery Counties with Harris County covering the majority of Houston.²² Houston is the fourth largest city in the United States.²³ There are 2,145,146 people in Houston. Women represent 49.8%. Caucasians or those in come combination with them represent 50.5%. White who are not Hispanic or Latino background represent 25.6%. Those considering themselves solely or in some combination with another race black represent 23.7%. Those who consider themselves of Hispanic or Latino origin of any race, account for 43.8% of the population.²⁴ Houston has 40 colleges, universities, and other institutions of higher learning. Those with high school diplomas represent 74.0% and 28.2% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Houstonians who own their own home represent 46.6%. The median cost of a home was \$123,800 and the median hold income was \$42,962; 21.0% of the people live below the poverty rate.

²¹"Houston Facts and Figures," Houston Facts and Figures, accessed December 4, 2012, <http://www.houstontx.gov/about/houston/houstonfacts.html>.

²²Ibid., accessed November 30, 2012.

²³United States, United States Census Bureau, United States Department of Commerce, Houston (city) QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau, accessed November 30, 2012, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/4835000.html>.

²⁴Ibid.

The Houston economy is very diverse. The medical center, Port of Houston, the energy Industry, and Airport Systems has a major impact on the economy. Alongside education many of the members at Brentwood work in these fields. The Texas Medical Center is the largest Medical complex in the World. It is comprised of fifty-two member institutions, spanning over 1,300 acres of land in 280 buildings. The Medical Center has 92,000 employees and contributes \$14 billion dollars to Houston's economy annually.²⁵

The port of Houston is a major factor in Houston's economy. Through the port, there are 1,026,820 ship-channel related jobs, which contributes \$178.5 billion to the economy.²⁶ "The port is consistently ranked 1st in the United States in foreign waterborne tonnage; first in U.S. imports; second in U.S. export tonnage and second in the U.S. in total tonnage. It is also the nation's leading break bulk post, handling 65 percent of all major U.S. project cargo."²⁷ Houston is considered the Energy Capital of the World. It has 5,000 energy related firms.²⁸ Houston's capacity for natural gas is 57.1% of the total United States refineries and 50% of the city employment. In the report, 2012 Houston Economic Outlook, Colliers International cites the Houston Energy industry contributes \$103 billion dollars to the economy annually.

The Houston airport system is composed of three facilities; George Bush Intercontinental Airport, William P. Hobby Airport, and Ellington Airport. Houston

²⁵"Texas Medical Center," Facts and Figures, accessed December 7, 2012, <http://texasmedicalcenter.org/facts-and-figures/>.

²⁶"Overview," Overview The Port of Houston, accessed December 7, 2012, <http://www.portofhouston.com/about-us/overview/>.

²⁷Ibid., accessed December 7, 2012.

²⁸"Houston Facts and Figures," Houston Facts and Figures, accessed December 4, 2012, <http://www.houstontx.gov/about/houston/houstonfacts.html>.

airport serviced 49.5 million in people 2010.²⁹ The Airport system contributed \$23 billion dollars to the Houston economy in 2003.³⁰ The Union Baptist Association is the local branch of the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston. The Union Baptist Association has a membership 567 churches in Houston. In their 2011 survey, 272 churches reported information accounting for 348,851 congregants with an average attendance of 158,197.³¹

The Mission Statement of Brentwood Baptist Church states, "Brentwood Baptist Church exists to serve God's kingdom and extend the gospel of Jesus Christ by: Reaching People, Developing Believers, and Engaging Missions."³² Their Slogan is, "The Church Where Christ is the main attraction."³³ Brentwood has 110 different active ministries that seek to fulfill its mission statement. In addition to the ministries, Brentwood has planted eighteen new missions that have become churches across the United States since 1984.³⁴ These ministries range from Criminal Justice, Food Pantry, tutoring, Brentwood Business Association, and a Singles Ministry.

Brentwood Baptist Church was originally founded as a white mission Church under Westbury Baptist Church in 1964 under the Southern Baptist Convention. It was established in the Brentwood Subdivision in southwest Houston. Dr. Donald Carroll was called as the first pastor. He led the church from 1965 to 1973. Under Dr. Carroll, the church was incorporated and six acres of land were purchased on Landmark Street in the

²⁹"History of HAS," Fly2Houston, accessed December 8, 2012, <http://www.fly2houston.com/About>.

³⁰Ibid., accessed December 8, 2012.

³¹Union Baptist Association, "Statistical Data," e-mail message to author, December 11, 2012.

³²Brentwood Baptist Church, Introduction, in 2011 Handbook.

³³Brentwood Baptist Church, Missions and Memories At-A-Glance 2008 Highlights.

³⁴Brentwood Baptist Church, Brentwood By The Numbers 2008, 2008, Fact Sheet.

Brentwood subdivision for the construction of a church.³⁵ On the heels of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Brentwood community was beginning to change. More Blacks were moving into the community. Dr. Carroll understood that it was essential to evangelize to everyone in the community. Dr. Carroll went door to door throughout the community inviting anyone who answered to church. Before long the makeup of the Church changed, African Americans within the congregation were the majority. In 1973 Dr. Carroll resigned as pastor of Brentwood church to start another mission church in Kentucky. In 1976 Brentwood called their first African American pastor. Dr. Hubert Nash served as pastor from 1976 to 1978.³⁶

In 1980 Brentwood called Dr. Joe Samuel Ratliff as their 3rd pastor.³⁷ At the time there were 500 members on roll and their budget was \$110,000.00. During the first year, 385 additional people united with the church. As represented in Appendix A figure 1, over the next ten years, Brentwood continued to have phenomenal growth. In 1986 Brentwood took in 1016 new members, of those, 133 members were baptized.³⁸ As shown in Appendix A, figure 2, over the next twelve years, the budget would also increase tremendously reaching \$2,458,000 in 1992. In 2003 Brentwood had an operating budget of 7,836,523.³⁹ Currently its budget is 5,838,880.⁴⁰ There are seventeen remaining

³⁵Brentwood Baptist Church, The Brentwood Story 2008.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Brentwood Baptist Church, Brentwood By The Numbers 2008, 2008, Fact Sheet.

³⁸Brentwood Baptist Church, "Church Growth," Brentwood Baptist Church, accessed December 5, 2012, Shelby.

³⁹Brentwood Baptist Church, 2003 Handbook, 36.

⁴⁰Brentwood Baptist Church, Introduction, in 2011 Handbook, 36.

active members that joined under Dr. Carroll.⁴¹ Brentwood's current membership is 6,491. Appendix A, figure 3 depicts the makeup of the congregation via age and sex. As shown in figure 4, In 2011 Brentwood added 129 new members to its roll. Brentwood currently employs twenty-two fulltime staff and sixty-five part-time employees.⁴²

Over the past thirty-two years, Dr. Ratliff and Brentwood acquired an additional 105 acres of land. In 1986 the Church constructed a 1,000-square-foot Prayer Chapel and in 1986 a new 55,000-square-foot Worship Center with a seating capacity of 1,850 was built. In 1997 Dr. Ratliff continued to build, building the Brentwood Cottages, a 6,500-square-foot facility eighteen bed transitional housing facility for men living with HIV/AIDS.⁴³

The Brentwood Cottages were not built without a fight. The Brentwood community civic group, who met at the church, many of which were members of Brentwood, fought to thwart Brentwood's efforts in building the transitional housing. They were afraid such a structure and the clientele it catered to would negatively affect the value of their property. The civic club petitioned the city and won an injunction against Brentwood.⁴⁴

Brentwood immediately filed a lawsuit against the city. After several months Brentwood won its lawsuit and was given permission to build the proposed transitional

⁴¹Brentwood Baptist Church, Active Members Joining 1965-1973, report (2012), accessed December 11, 2012, Brentwood Shelby System.

⁴²Paul Jefferson, "Business Administrator," interview by Joe Ford, December 3, 2012.

⁴³Brentwood Baptist Church, The Brentwood Story 2008.

⁴⁴Paul Jefferson, "Business Administrator," interview by author, December 3, 2012.

housing. Since its inception, the program has grown to offer social services, health education, rental assistance, utility assistance, and nutritional counseling.⁴⁵

Brentwood is no stranger to controversy. Before Brentwood undertook the AIDS/HIV Transitional housing, Dr. Ratliff and Reverend Carolyn Pickens attest to Brentwood being the first Baptist church in Houston to ordain Women ministers in 1986. Along with the Southern Baptist Convention, Reverend Pickens was of many members who were against women preachers. She now serves as the Minister of Institutional Development.⁴⁶

In 2000 Dr. Ratliff built The Doris Garner Ratliff Center for Child Development.⁴⁷ This facility is 9,000-square-feet and has nine classrooms and two large play areas. During the week, the center caters to newborns to five years of age throughout the day with their daycare. In the evening the center provides an Afterschool program and Drop-in or Service for parents needing hourly care for children up to the age of twelve.⁴⁸ Five teachers staff the center on a daily basis. According to the Brentwood Baptist Church Quarterly Business Meeting Report, the center averages twenty-nine children in their daycare and fifteen children in the afterschool program. The center is also available on Sundays during worship services.⁴⁹

⁴⁵Paul Jefferson, "Business Administrator," interview by author, December 3, 2012.

⁴⁶Carolyn C. Pickens, "Director of Institutional Advancement," telephone interview by Joe Ford, December 3, 2012.

⁴⁷Brentwood Baptist Church, Brentwood By The Numbers 2008, 2008, Fact Sheet.

⁴⁸"Brentwood Baptist Church," Center for Child Development, accessed December 8, 2012, <http://www.brentwoodbaptist.org/center-for-child-development-brentwood.aspx>.

⁴⁹Brentwood Baptist Church, Quarterly Business Report 3rd Quarter, report (2012).

The Joe Samuel Ratliff Lifelong Learning Center was built in 2001. The 75,000-square-foot-complex boasts of a full size gymnasium, Ballroom to accommodate 500 people banquet-style seating, Children's Lobby, professional kitchen and exercise and dance rooms, a computer lab with space for twenty-four individuals and a plethora of classrooms. From 2001-2003 the facility housed the McDonald's Franchise Pilot Program.⁵⁰ Brentwood places a large emphasis on missions and ministry. In 2008 \$155,000 was set-aside for missions.⁵¹ In addition to the funds set aside in the budget, Brentwood undertakes many other projects over and above the mission budget. In the 2008 pamphlet, *Mission and Memories At-A-Glance*, Brentwood highlights some of their accomplishments. Below are few of Brentwood's mission highlights. In 2008 Brentwood donated \$50,000 to the Martin Luther King Memorial Foundation. Through the Criminal Justice ministry over 550 toys were given to children and youth for Angel Tree, and school supplies and uniforms were provided for 270 children and youth for Back-To-School. The AIDS Ministry provided \$200,000 in assistance, 250 taxi and cab vouchers, and transitional Housing for twenty-five residents. The Food Pantry provided groceries for 2,571 families, which accounts for 9,608 individual family members and distributed 350 Thanksgiving Meals. Outreach provided food, water, and ice for 1,245 for victims affected by Hurricane Ike.⁵²

⁵⁰"Brentwood Baptist Church," Lifelong Learning Center, accessed December 8, 2012, <http://www.brentwoodbaptist.org/life-long-learning-center.aspx>.

⁵¹Brentwood Baptist Church, 2008 Handbook (2008), 36.

⁵²Brentwood Baptist Church, *Missions and Memories At-A-Glance 2008 Highlights*.

Synergy

Merriam Webster Dictionary defines transition as a “passage from one state, stage, subject, or place to another: or a movement, development, or evolution from one form, stage, or style to another.”⁵³ Though few things in life are certain, we can be assured change and transition is inevitable. The church is not immune from experiencing change and transition. The church must be willing to change and transition as well.

In my spiritual autobiography, I recount five different instances my family and I moved from one ministry to another in an eleven-year time span. During these moves my family had to adjust to the different cultures of the church. We also had to adapt to the larger social environments. One of the churches my family encountered was located in a rural community. Upon coming from a church that was located in an urban community, my family had to adjust to the lifestyle change. In the rural community we traded running water for well-water, indoor restrooms for outhouses, and meat markets for farms with live animals. These changes were drastic and a necessary part of our family’s assimilation into the community.

The church cannot be afraid to change with the times. One of the issues, which the church in the rural community was plagued with was its inability to change. Though it was the end of the twentieth century, the church and community was stuck in an earlier time period. As the youth of the community grew up and gained their independence, they moved away. The community began to decline and the church eventually had to close its doors. Unfortunately, their need to hold on to a time past and unwillingness to embrace

⁵³"Transition," Merriam-Webster.com, 2012, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transition>.

progress and innovation resulted in an aging congregation who could no longer take care of the church.

While Brentwood was originally founded as a white mission church, the community in which it was located began to change. Its pastor, realizing the shift in the community, understood the importance of not only evangelizing to the whites in the area, but the need to reach out to the Blacks in the area as well. The pastor made a concerted effort to integrate the church. Today the community of the church is majority African American and Hispanic. Had the pastor not been proactive in welcoming and initiating change, there is a possibility the church would not be standing today.

As the current pastor progressed in his ministry at Brentwood, he also saw the necessity of change. When he was initially called to pastor the church, he was the only minister on staff. As the congregation grew, the pastor realized that he needed help to effectively minister to the congregation. He hired other ministers to serve the congregation. Both the pastor and the congregation would have to adjust from operating as a church with a solo pastor to a church having multiple staff pastors. The pastor's insight and action most likely contributed to the continued growth of the church.

While change and transition may not be easy, they are necessary. As culture and society shifts, so must the church. Aubrey Malphurs, church consultant and Senior Professor of Leadership and Pastoral Ministry at Dallas Theological Seminary argues that everything has a natural life-cycle including the church. The Sigmoid Curve represents the lifecycle of a church. The Sigmoid Curve illustrates the different stages of a church. The Church is born, it grows, and it eventually plateaus. Without actions to move the church past the plateau, it begins to decline and will eventually die. Churches that refuse

to change and transition in this postmodern culture run the risk of reaching its plateau and eventually decline. Church must not only be able to identify the shift in culture, but the church must be willing to make the adjustments if it is to thrive.

Change and transition both necessitate the need for churches to take on the arduous task of reinventing themselves. As churches and the communities evolve, the critical question they must wrestle with becomes who are we; where are we headed; and how do we live out our faith given our present state? While the church's message must remain the same, the method in which a congregation uses to present the message might very well be different. The spiritual autobiography and context both suggest change is non-negotiable. The church in Canada depicts what happens when change is not embraced. In comparison, the examples from Brentwood portray how change can be beneficial and promote growth.

The second theme was that of community. The church does not exist in and of itself, but it exists in relation to a larger community. The rural church that I experienced was a part of the larger community born out of the Underground Railroad. On a similar note, as Brentwood transitioned from a predominantly white church to that of a Black church, it took on the identity of its community. Luke Powery, dean of Duke Chapel and an associate professor of the practice of homiletics at Duke Divinity School, argues, "The external activities of a church (that is, social mission) authenticate its internal communal spirituality."⁵⁴ What the church says and believes ought to be demonstrated in its actions. The church cannot afford ignore societal issues because our faith demands that we address them. Powery echoes Jürgen Moltmann in that he says, "The two directions of the

⁵⁴Luke A. Powery, *Spirit Speech: Lament and Celebration in Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009).

church as a local congregation led by the Spirit are inward and outward, the gathering of the congregation and its sending by way of its vocations in society. The sending into every day is just as important as the festal worship of the church.”⁵⁵ Our interaction and involvement in community is just as important as our gathering for worship. In fact, we gather so that we may send out.

Delman Coates in his sermon, “Water from the Church,” references Ezekiel 47:1–12. He asserts water must not only flow inside the temple, meaning the church should not be the only one benefiting, but water should flow outside the temple. He suggests the water signifies the influence of the temple’s ministry. When water flows from the temple, there is a transformation of deserted places.⁵⁶ True ministry cannot be confined inside the walls of church but must overflow into the community. The measure of ministry is not determined by how big a church is, but how great of an impact the church is having on its community. The community ought to be better because of the church. If a church were forced to shut its doors, the community should feel the void left by the absence of the church.

Methodist pastor and author Morgan Guyton makes a sad indictment against some believers of the Christian faith. He suggests, “So many Christians today abstract their vertical relationship with God from their horizontal relationships with their neighbors and even pit the vertical against the horizontal... The abstraction of God from the creation He loves is the root of a particular immorality that afflicts God’s most zealous

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Delmon Coates, “Water from the Church” (sermon, Ellis–Jones Convocation, Virginia Union University Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology, Hampton, November 14, 2012).

cheerleaders.”⁵⁷ When we disassociate our social responsibility from our relationship to God, we dishonor and displease our creator. Our connection to the Creator necessitates that we are concerned with the welfare and well-being of our fellow neighbors.

The rural church in Canada was a community of believers that lived together, worked together, and worshipped together. It was a community that overcame hardships and struggle. What happened on Sundays was only an extension of their daily lives. Brentwood has shown itself to be an advocate of the marginalized. Brentwood took a stand against the unfair treatment from the Southern Baptist Convention in refusing to ordain woman clergy. They fought to provide services to men with HIV and AIDs that others chose to ignore. Both institutions realized that in as much as they do it to the least of these, they do it unto God.

In contrast, as I reevaluated some of the other ministries my family and I were a part of, I recognized that because of their preoccupation with their spiritual relationship, they neglected their moral obligation to humanity. The apex of their ministry was the Sunday morning worship experience. Service to others was not a priority to them. This congregation was stagnant; there was no numeric growth, no excitement, and no progress.

The last common thread is ministry. The Greek term for ministry is diakonia. It is derived from the word diakonos, which means attendance, service, or relief.⁵⁸ In essence, the goal of ministry is to be of service or to provide relief. Ministry must go beyond a

⁵⁷Morgan Guyton, "Worship without Justice Dishonors God," *Ministry Matters*, December 18, 2012, accessed January 27, 2012, <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/article/entry/3470/worship-without-justice-dishonors-god>.

⁵⁸James Strong, *Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary* (Austin, TX: Wordsearch, 2007), e-book, 1248.

Sunday morning homily; it is less about programming and more about caring enough to affect every individual on a personal level. It entails building relationships. Ministry must meet people at the point of their needs and minister to them through their hurt and brokenness. Wounded people need to know they have a place to go where the wounded can be healed, and where the wounded can help others heal.

The ministry aspect of church is a vital component to its success because it is there that the needs of the people are met. Ministry occurs when we find a need and fill it. The pastor of Brentwood recalls when he first arrived that there were only a few seniors in the congregation, but as he aged, so did the congregation, creating a need for a senior's ministry. Essentially, as the need arises within a congregation or community, it becomes the church's responsibility to try to fill the need. Both the basketball league in Detroit and the youth group in Plainfield sought to meet a specific need in my spiritual autobiography. The church sought to provide alternative options to being on the streets for children in urban areas.

As evident in my spiritual autobiography, it was the ministries of the church, which endeared me to the church. The basketball and bowling leagues, summer camps, lock-ins, and conventions made me want to take part in the church. In fact every opportunity I had, I spent at the church because of the love I developed for the church through the ministries.

In a similar manner, I saw the impact of ministries in my current context was having on the community; ministries such as the Aides Ministry, Food Pantry, Cancer Support, and Respite care. I wanted to be a part of a church that was making a difference and effecting individuals for the better. The testimony of not only the congregation, but

the community as to how Brentwood had been there for them during their time of need quickly made me realize that ministry is about touching the individual lives of people which can only be done through the building of relationships. We must be cognizant of the changing landscape of ministry. Now more than ever before the church must compete with other social organizations. No longer is the church the epicenter for social engagement and civic involvement for many Christians. Our congregations now have access to different social outlets, such as fraternities and sororities. Civic groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League also vie for their attention. Parents are enrolling their children in community recreational organizations and social clubs such as Jack and Jill to provide their children with services and opportunities that the church, at one time, oversaw.

In my spiritual autobiography, I write about my experience playing in the church basketball league in Detroit, Michigan. The league was very strong and youth from across the city sought to be a part of it. The league prospered because there were not many organizations in the city offering such an opportunity. In contrast, when I tried to develop a youth basketball league at my church in Metuchen, New Jersey, the response was not as great. While there was interest in the league, it only lasted for two seasons because many of the youth were playing in other community recreational leagues as well.

In my context, it is evident that the young adult population makes up a large portion of the congregation. However, those who are actively engaged at the church were of very minimal numbers, and even the ones who are, split their time between the church and other organizations they are affiliated with. For example, one of the young adult leaders is also involved with another community organization. Because the two

organizations meet at the same time, the young adult leader alternates between attending the meetings for the organizations. One of the biggest challenges I face is scheduling conflicts. There is never a good day or time that works for everyone. I recognize, however, that individuals will make time for the things, which interests them.

The church must be prayerful, vigilant, and watchful—always evaluating their ministry, recognizing that as season's change and people change, so must their ministries. Pastor Rick Warren suggests ministries are developed for a particular time and moment in order to be effective and efficient. As long as the wave is active and vibrant, they must stay on it, but as it fizzles out, they must dismount and look for new opportunities to serve people.⁵⁹ All ministries are not meant to last a lifetime; some ministries are meant only for a season. If ministry is to remain fresh and vibrant, we must recognize when ministries have fulfilled their purpose and be willing to let go in order to pursue new ministry opportunities.

Some of the churches I was affiliated with in my spiritual walk believed that ministries should last forever. The church in Metuchen boasted of having over seventy ministries. However, not all of the ministries were active. Over time interest in some ministries waned due to a lack of a need and they became a ministry in name only.

In my context, I mention a number of vibrant ministries at Brentwood. The health of the ministries is not by accident. To make sure each ministry is serving its purpose and meeting the congregation's needs evaluates the ministries of the church annually. The staff reviews attendance records along with the ministry programming to reach their

⁵⁹Richard Warren, *The Purpose-driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

determination. There have been instances when the staff has decided that certain ministries were no longer effective and had run their course.

The need for our churches and communities to embrace change cannot be ignored. My spiritual autobiography and context suggest that fighting change is futile and in the end can be detrimental to our existence. The church must see itself in the changing landscape of the society and determine how it can best meet the needs of society. Meeting the needs of society entails recognizing that the church is not an island but is connected to a larger community. It is only as the church engages the community that the possibility for growth is realized and we fulfill the mandate of God.

Last, ministry must be relevant. Ministry that is not relevant will not have a lasting effect on the people it seeks to minister to. Ministry that impacts the congregation on a personal level builds bonds of love and reverence for the church. True ministry is selfless in that it expects nothing in return and is done out of a pure desire to help.

Transition, community, and ministry go hand in hand. We ought to always be actively engaged in the work of Christ. We should always be seeking for new opportunities where we can be of service to God and humanity, both inside of the church and within the community. Even in the midst of a changing landscape, the church must seek out new methods and opportunities to live out its purpose.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

This chapter will develop a theoretical foundation for the proposed Doctor of Ministry project, “Engaging the Next Generation in Church in a Postmodern Culture.” In order to reach this end, disciplines of anthropology, psychology, and sociology filtered through a Christian perspective will be used.

The American Sociological Association defines sociology as “the social science involving the study of the social lives of people, groups, and societies; the study of our behavior as social beings, covering everything from the analysis of short contacts between anonymous individuals on the street to the study of global social processes.”¹

Sociology explains how people relate to one another in their specific culture or society. These relationships to culture and to one another are interpreted on the basis of behaviors and emotions that are a result of or a cause of the environment. Sociology also attempts to bridge the gap of many other social science disciplines, such as psychology, economics, anthropology, and history to explain the various transformations or adaptations that man has had to make since evolving from a primitive, country type society to one that is overrun with industry and urbanization. Essentially, sociologists examine how humans relate to their dynamic world, how they see themselves or what role they play in that dynamic world.

¹Colin Jerolmack, “Toward a Sociology of Nature,” *Sociological Quarterly* 53, (2012), no. 4:501, MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost, accessed November 6, 2013.

Simply put by the American Psychological Association, "Psychology is the study of the mind and behavior." This study encompasses every portion of the human lifespan and development. The main method of psychology is self-observation. However, in some cases, the person is not capable of such a task due to age and/or mental capacity. Therefore, psychologists are trained to intervene in order to assist in the process of examining, interpreting, and helping others to understand these mental distinctive. The goal of the psychologists' work is to help guide individuals into a state of wellness.

The Oxford dictionary defines anthropology as, "the study of humankind. In particular it is the comparative study of human societies and cultures and their development."² It seeks to answers questions such as the beginnings or the origins of humanity. Anthropology explores humanity's position and purpose. Theological anthropology combines the study of God and humanity. E. C. Bragg suggests theological anthropology explores humanity's "origin, destiny, and redemption. It is interested in the scriptural presentation of man's divine origin, his composition, his spiritual state, and his redemption. It seeks the answer from the scriptures as to the questions of man's beginning, the why of his condition now, and the where of his going."³ It is only as we understand our beginnings and the why of our condition now, can we begin to postulate how to best handle what is to come. One cannot look at the sociological and psychological aspects of this next generation without considering the impact that

²"Definition of Anthropology in English," Anthropology: Definition of Anthropology in Oxford Dictionary, accessed October 11, 2013, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/anthropology.

³E. C. Bragg, "Systematic Theology Anthropology," AnthropologyR.pdf, 1, accessed October 11, 2013, <http://www.trinitycollege.edu/assets/files/ECBragg/AnthropologyR.pdf>.

anthropology has on this present culture. In defining the church, John Wesley's major thrust for the Christian was that of holiness.

In speaking of the next generation, the chapter will focus on those individuals born after 1970. Those individuals who fall within this category are commonly referred to as being associated with generation Y, X, or the millennial generation. One of the characteristics of the next generation is that it is less distinctly defined. When generation X and Y begins and ends is subjective. What is understood is that this demographic came of age around the turn of the millennium.

Sociologist Tim Clydesdales refers to the majority of teens as semi-religious. He argues, "Teens believe in God, identify themselves with a religious tradition, indicate some interest in religious life, but generally assign religion to a future period in their lives."⁴ Clydesdale argument suggests religion for teens is always on the outside periphery of their lives, they know God and believe in God, but religious commitment if it occurs does not happen until later in life for most. He contends the faith of semi-religious teens mirror that of popular American culture and its morals. The religion, which both semi-religious teens the American popular culture practice is usually much more tempered to the religious beliefs they claim to follow.

Without any reservation, Kenda Dean and Denton would agree with Clydesdale. They contend the Christianity, which is being encountered in this postmodern generation lack depth and substance. They go as far to say that American Christianity is almost

⁴Timothy T. Clydesdale, *The First Year Out: Understanding American Teens after High School* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 58.

Christian, but not quite.⁵ In essence we do not fully prescribe to the teaching of Christ. American religion mixes consumer-driven therapeutic individualism and religious pragmatism. Kenda Dean also asserts that teens' faith is only a product of their parents practice. This is just one example of how one generation influences the up and coming generation. Consequently, the problem does not lie within the next generation, but the problem is much larger. It is the problem of the present generation.

Like Kenda Dean, *Souls in Transition* by Christian Snell, focuses on young adults eighteen to twenty-three years of age. Within the book, Snell emphasizes the importance of parents and other adults in shaping the spiritual lives of the next generation. Snell like authors mentioned before, believes the next generation's view and understanding of religion and values are inextricably tied to the influence of the previous generation.

Alyce McKenzie asserts, "The past is made alive and powerful for the present so that it can shape the future."⁶ In essence, the previous generation has a large impact on the next generation. That which the new generation knows is built upon what they have learned from the generation before. The previous generations serve as an orienting instrument, which the new generation uses to formulate their thought and beliefs.

In the *Word Biblical Commentary*, Butler contrasts two generations against each other; he shows that while each generation is invariably connected to other, each generation must make their own decision. While we are connected, the fate of our future ultimately lies within the choices we make for ourselves. This suggests the next

⁵Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4.

⁶Alyce M. McKenzie, "2 Timothy 1:3-7," *Interpretation* 60, no. 3 (July 2006): 319, accessed February 20, 2013, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials.

generation can choose to continue in the path of the previous generation or they can purge a new reality for themselves.

The biblical passage, Joshua 5:2–9 first teaches us the significance of generational influence that cannot be overlooked. It shows previous generations can either negatively or positively affect the next generation. In the case of Israel, Butler suggests the lack of regard for God resulted in the younger generation being considered, “a nation of God’s enemies until it was circumcised.”⁷ In many cases, generations take their cues of religious commitment from their parents. This is why Kenda Dean argues, “The religious and spiritual choices of American teenagers echo, with astonishing clarity, the religious and spiritual choices of the adults who love them, lackadaisical faith is not young people’s issue, but ours.”⁸

It is the older generation, which is raising up a new generation whose faith is just a side note. As seen in the Joshua passage, the older generation’s neglect to circumcise the younger generation directly speaks to the devotion and commitment of the younger generation. Circumcision served as atonement for the children of Israel sins. It is also a sign of their faith, devotion, and their renewed covenant with God; this covenant was first given to Abraham and was extended to all of his offspring. Though the covenant is extended to all of Abraham’s offspring, the execution of the covenant is conditional.

The covenant would only be valid to those who chose to abide by the covenant. Howard suggests, “While the elements of this covenant would not be broken by God and they remained in effect throughout all generations, each generation of Israelites—indeed,

⁷Trent C. Butler, *Word Biblical Commentary: Joshua*, vol. 7 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 59.

⁸Dean, Kenda, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4. Kindle Edition.

each individual Israelite—had to make its own decision whether to obey the covenant.”⁹ The Abrahamic Covenant was as much as a corporate act as it was individual decision. In neglecting to continue the circumcision of their children the first generation collectively rejected God, which in essence voided the Abrahamic Covenant for that generation and led the generation to be labeled a nation of God’s enemy.

Author Eric Metaxas conveys this same idea in both of his books *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy: A Righteous Gentile vs. the Third Reich* and *Men And the Secret of Their Greatness* as well as in his lecture, "Bonhoeffer." Bonhoeffer understood the importance of his influence on the lives of a younger generation. Metaxas writes, “Bonhoeffer did it of his own accord; it had no connection to his church obligations. But he felt it vitally important to train up the next generation of young men.”¹⁰ Still in training himself, Bonhoeffer understood the need to develop young men who would continue in his religious tradition.

While each generation builds on the next, is important to note this postmodern generation is dramatically different from that of the previous generation. This Postmodern culture is also becoming a post-Christian culture. In the article, “The Millennial View,” Jamaal Abdl-Alim cites a study conducted jointly by the Public Religion Research Institute and Georgetown’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs entitled, “A Generation in Transition: Religion, Values, and Politics among College-Age Millennials: Findings from the 2012 Millennial Values Survey.”

⁹D. M. Howard, Jr., *The New American Commentary Joshua*, vol. 5 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 150.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 64.

Abdul-Alim asserts according to the study, it is becoming more difficult to place millennials in a particular religious category. Abdul-Alim suggests that millennials are moving away from the religion of their youth, and this wave is the most prevalent among Caucasian Millennialist.¹¹ In a like manner, David Kinnamen suggest according to the Barna study there is a 43 percent drop-off between the teen and early adult years in terms of church engagement.¹² In an article published by Relevant Magazine, Professor Bryan T. Calvin sites a study from the 2012 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life's Religious Landscape Survey that also suggests the number of people who do not identify with a religion has risen to 20 percent of the U. S. population, and for adults age eighteen to twenty-nine, that number rises to over 30 percent.

In *Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture*, Leonard Sweet suggests there are three responses to deal with the changing culture of the world. The church can deny it altogether, acknowledge it but not address it, or respond not by simply riding the wave, but by getting in front of the wave or futuring. Like much of the statistics suggests, Sweet characterizes this postmodern generation as anti-Christian.

Spirituality has replaced religion. While it is anti-Christian or religious, it is open to God.

The problem is not so much a disdain for God or Jesus, but it is the institutionalized religion this postmodern generation is rejecting.

¹¹Jamaal Abdul-Alim, "The Millennial View," *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* 29, no. 12 (July 19, 2012): 8, accessed October 30, 2013, <http://tsuhhelweb.tsu.edu:2048/login?url=http://tsuhhelweb.tsu.edu:2072/docview/1027229818?accountid=7093>.

¹²David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church...and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2011), Kindle Locations 226-227.

David Kinnaman, author of *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith* joins the conversation with Sweet in recognizing that this generation is much different from the Baby Boomers. He agrees that we are living in a post-Christian society; but like Sweet believes it is a great opportunity for the church to connect with the next generation.

Like Kinnaman, sociologist Robert Wuthnow points out in his book, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty-and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* that there is a growing number of Americans that is disconnected from the church. Wuthnow focuses his studies on individuals, which fall within the age range of twenty-one to forty-five. He states, “This increase is especially apparent among younger adults—rising in the space of a generation from one person in eleven (1972-76) to one person in five (1998-2002).” Wuthnow gives two main reasons why there is a decline in the church attendance of young adults. The first is what he states to be changing family dynamics. Wuthnow points out that the percentage of married young adults in the church between 1972-1976 is almost identical to the percentage of married young adults in 1998-2002. The deviation comes with single young adults, that is, young adults are taking longer to get married, have children, and establish their careers, all factors, which contribute to church involvement. The second major reason is what Wuthnow calls spiritual tinkering. Spiritual tinkering “involves piecing together ideas about spirituality from many sources.” Access to television, the Internet, globalization, and immigration gives young adults more options than ever to piece together their beliefs. The church is no longer the major resource young adults use to put together their belief system. Wuthnow concludes that young adults are no less religious or spiritual than prior

generations, they are just taking longer to conform to mainstream social values, which include spiritual participation.

To comprehend the up and coming generation, we must not only give adherence to the sociological issues or factors facing us, but we must also understand the psychological issues of this new generation. We must understand how they think. Kinnamen, Wuthnow, and Sweet all acknowledge the era we are living in is much different than ever before. They argue there is a disconnect from the previous generation to the current generation; in part, it occurs because of the way in which we think. Kinnaman suggests Millennials view the church as overprotective, shallow, anti-science, repressive, exclusive, and doubtless. In *The Next Christians: Seven Ways You Can Live the Gospel and Restore the World*, Gabe Lyons argues the millennial generation perceives the church as judgmental, hypocritical, and proselytizing. If the church is looking to impact and attract this millennial generation we must take steps to address these issues. Lyons suggests the church itself must fall back in love with the gospel of Jesus Christ and then look to build meaning relationships with the next generation instead of looking at them as commodity to be evangelized.

It is important to understand not only how this postmodern generation views the church, but it is equally important to understand how the postmodern generation is viewed. Jean M. Twenge suggests studies reveal the millennial generation is more narcissistic than previous generations. The pervasiveness of selfies or pictures taken of one's self and displayed throughout various social outlets is evidence enough to prove such a point. Joel Stein, a writer for Time Magazine begins his article. "In May of 2013 popular media outlets, such as Time Magazine and the Today Show both presented a

piece on Millennials or Generation Me. Both pieces begin by citing common conceptions or misconceptions of the millennial generation. They state ‘millennials are narcissistic, lazy, entitled, and never looking up from their phones.’”¹³ This gives a description of a generation with a preoccupation with self. Psychologist Brent Roberts argues the issue of narcissism is not relegated to the millennium generation. In fact an accusation of narcissism has been made of every previous generation. However, as we age, we grow out of our narcissistic behaviors.

In the New Testament text, Paul first warns Timothy about the narcissistic behavior of self. John MacArthur elucidates Paul’s charge to Timothy. Paul tells Timothy to fight against narcissism and self will. John MacArthur suggests Timothy’s position before God the Father and Jesus Christ the Judge is one of five motivating factors as to why Timothy must preach the Word faithfully. Timothy is to preach every opportunity he gets; it does not matter if he feels like preaching or whether his audience wants to hear him, he is to proclaim the Word at all times. Self will and pleasure would suggest Timothy could choose when he preach the Gospel, but Paul reminds Timothy in order to be faithful to his calling, he must remember his position in Christ and not himself; in essence, the Gospel is not about self, but Christ which he preaches.

In the New Testament text of 2 Timothy, Paul warns Timothy about the narcissistic behavior of the people. In verses 3 and 4, Paul states, “For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.” The New

¹³Ayman Mohyeldin, writer, "The Today Show," in *Millennial Attitude: Confident or Entitled*, NBC, May 15, 2013.

American Commentary expounds on the fact that people would be lovers of selves. Humanity's objective is gratification of self. William Barclay would agree. Barclay suggests, "Our 'natural' selves' revolt against biblical truths." In short, anything that has a tendency to cause discomfort or is convicting, we naturally shy away. We are drawn to those things give us pleasure. The problem of narcissism did not start with the current generation, but as Roberts notes, it is a pervasive throughout every generation.

Within the historical context, Michal Van Dyke in *Radical Integrity* and Eric Metaxas give insight to the narcissistic undertones of Adolf Hitler. Hitler portrayed himself as the one person who could restore Germany to her former glory. Hitler maintained Germany needed a strong leader; they needed someone who could bring them out of their state of despondency. He called it the Führer Principle. Bonhoeffer was vehemently against Hitler and his philosophy. Bonhoeffer understood "true authority must, by definition, be submitted to a higher authority—which is to say God—and true leadership must be servant leadership."¹⁴

When people make themselves the center of anything, the concern is no longer for the other but self. When one's self is the end all, one errors in ideas, philosophies, and morals. What one believes becomes relative. In *Lost in Transition*, Christian Smith labels this moral relativism. Moral relativism "supposes and proposes (1) that no objective moral truths exist (or, if they do exist, humans cannot know them well), and therefore (2) that what people take to be moral truths are only socially constructed, historically and culturally relative ideas about morality, which they may believe are objectively true (and

¹⁴Eric Metaxas, *Seven Men And the Secret of Their Greatness* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 101.

have good reason for doing so).”¹⁵ It is because of misconstrued moral concepts of not only Hitler, but also Germany as a whole, which allowed such atrocities against those of Jewish decent.

¹⁵Christian Smith, Kari Christoffersen, Hilary Davidson, Patricia Snell Herzog *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23, Kindle Edition.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Biblical Foundation

Joshua 5:2–9 and 2 Timothy 4:1–5

Joshua 5:2-9 and 2 Timothy 4:1-5 give a blueprint for engaging the next generation in ministry in a postmodern culture. Both passages give evidence of a generation that has reason to be disillusioned given their current state. In Joshua 5, we are introduced to a generation who has only known the wilderness. The generation before had left Egypt in route to the Promised Land, but because of rebellion against God, the former generation failed to see God's promise fulfilled, leaving the later generation in limbo. In the New Testament scripture, Timothy is in Ephesus. There, he is in the midst of a church full of turmoil. Persecution of Christians is at its height and all around him are false teachers. We find in the midst of these passages the central idea that constant and consistent biblical teaching is the only solution for all of the challenges facing each new generation.

In the first passage, Joshua is leading a new generation of Israelites out of the wilderness into the Promised Land. Before they enter the Promised Land, they must be circumcised not only physically but also spiritually. The generation before had left the children of Israel with habits and rituals from foreign nations. They picked up customs and manners of their neighbors and incorporated them into their religion. This generation

saw the danger of its polluted religion. Their parent's generation was not able to enter the Promise Land and they knew the only way they would be able to enter Canaan was to cut away everything that was opposed to the Law, which God had given them. Joshua 5 exhibits what happens when we are willing to circumcise our hearts.

On the other hand, 2 Timothy 4:1-5 warns us of danger whenever we try to add to the Word of God. Paul tells Timothy times will become difficult because each generation will try to add their spin to the gospel. Their preoccupation with assimilating a word that is pleasing to them will lead to perilous times. Paul exhorts Timothy to be steadfast in preaching, to counter that which seeks to sway his generation.

The account of the children of Israel being circumcised is the first of three narratives found in Joshua chapter 5. These narratives are considered a part of the priestly strand inserted into the Deuteronomic history account of the conquest of Canaan as a way to recognize and affirm Israel's origins and identity from the initial covenant God makes with Abraham up until the present time.¹ Originally a folktale, the writer uses the anecdote to explain the need for the circumcision of the second generation.² The practice of circumcision was very important to the priestly writer. The act of circumcision connected the children of Israel with their God.

In examining the literary content of the text closer, it has been suggested a portion of the text has been omitted. Howard notes the Qumran or Dead Sea Scrolls places it at Joshua 8:30–35. The omitted segment gives the account of the covenant renewal ceremony, where Joshua builds an altar, offers sacrifices, and records and reads the Law of Moses. The placement of this segment has been suggested to be between Joshua 5:1

¹Trent C. Butler, *Word Biblical Commentary: Joshua*, vol. 7 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 57.

²*Ibid.*, 55.

and Joshua 5:2. The placing of Joshua 8:30-35 between verses 1 and 2, indicate Joshua and Israel sought to fulfill Moses' instruction by performing the circumcision and through the observance of the Passover.³ Deuteronomy 27 instructs Joshua and Israel three times to perform the covenant renewal ceremony directly after crossing the Jordan; given the above information, the placement of Joshua 8:30-35 between Joshua 5:1-2 is very plausible.

The book of Joshua chronicles the history of Israel and their conquest of Canaan. Joshua was gradually composed 200-600 years after the actual events during the Davidic Monarchy. Authorship of Joshua is not attributed to any one author; rather numerous authors compiled Joshua. Scholars suggest there is at least two strands that makeup Joshua: the Deutoronomistic History commonly referred to as the D strand, and the Priestly or P strand. The parts of Joshua identified as the Deutoronomistic history strand was mainly written between 714 and 609 BCE during the reign of Hezekiah and Josiah.⁴ While some scholars suggest the priestly strand was written before the Deutoronomistic history, it is most commonly believed the priestly strand was composed during or just after the Babylonian exile.⁵

Juxtaposed to the book of Joshua, 2 Timothy is a part of the Pauline Epistles that are letters most theologians accept as written by Paul. However, there are three schools of thought that refute Paul being the author of the Pastoral Epistles. The Amanuensis

³D. M. Howard, Jr., *The New American Commentary Joshua*, vol. 5 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 146.

⁴Harriett J. Olsen, ed., *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 2 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), "Composition During The Monarchical Period," accessed February 14, 2013, <http://www.ministrymatters.com>.

⁵*Ibid.*, *Priestly Additions to Joshua*.

Hypothesis recognizes the Pastoral Epistles as Pauline under the influence of an Amanuensis. The Fragment Hypothesis suggests someone gathered pieces of Paul's writing and formulated three letters, which addressed the issues of churches that had come after Paul's death. The final hypothesis, The Fiction Hypothesis suggests the letters are completely counterfeit, and was written in the second century in opposition to heresy. Those who favor the fragment hypothesis and Fiction Hypothesis proposed the idea of pseudepigraphy or the writing of a book or letter under someone else's name.⁶

In considering the literary content and style of 2 Timothy, we find that 2 Timothy is the second of two letters written to Timothy, whom most contemporary theologians accept was written by Paul. While the literary style of 2 Timothy is congruent with the other Pastoral Epistles, it differs from the other Pastorals because it is a personal letter that Paul writes to encourage Timothy to stand strong against the false doctrines and teachers that has infiltrated Ephesus. 2 Timothy 4:1-5 is Paul's ending charge to Timothy to remain faithful. Commencing with chapter one of 2 Timothy, Paul writes Timothy as a means of encouragement. Paul exhorts Timothy to be bold in the face of adversity, to remember his Godly heritage, to be on guard against false teaching, and to brace for decaying times. All the while, Timothy must keep in mind the second coming of Christ. It is at the end of this discourse that Paul gives his final charge to Timothy to Preach!

Dating the composition of 2 Timothy is not without challenge. It is unclear whether the letter was written before or after Paul's arrest. Mounce suggests Paul writes this letter to Timothy at the end of his life against the backdrop of Paul's imprisonment

⁶William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46 (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 2000), cxviii.

and impending death at the hands of the Roman government around 67 A.D.⁷ Some scholars believe 2 Timothy was not written by Paul and suggests 2 Timothy could have been composed right after Paul's death well into 135 A.D.⁸ While there are discrepancies as to when the book was actually written, the affirmation of Paul as the author suggests 2 Timothy was written around 67 A.D.

The first text suggests that the influence of the previous generation plays an important role in the development of the next generation. Joshua 5 first teaches us the significance of generational influence cannot be overlooked. It shows previous generations can either negatively or positively affect the next generation. In the case of Israel, the lack of regard for God resulted in the younger generation being considered, "a nation of God's enemies until it was circumcised."⁹ Every generation must choose whether they will be a people of God or a nation of God's enemies.¹⁰

To show the choice each generation must make, Joshua 5 juxtaposes the new or current generation to that of the previous generation. Howard notes, "The word *all* (*kōl*) is found six times in vv. 4-8, referring to the totality of one or the other of these groups (vv. 4 [2x], 5 [2x], 6, 8). In vv. 4-5a, and 6, the references are to the circumcised but rebellious group that had all died out. The two references in vv. 5b and 8 are to the uncircumcised ones, all of whom Joshua circumcised."¹¹ The two groups play against each other. On one hand there is a rebellious generation who eventually die out, yet on

⁷Ibid., lxii.

⁸Ibid., lxiv.

⁹Butler, *Word Biblical Commentary: Joshua*, 59.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Howard, *The New American Commentary Joshua*, 150.

the other hand, there is the new generation of uncircumcised Israelites who are circumcised by Joshua. Their circumcision serves as atonement for their sins. It is also a sign of their faith, devotion, and their renewed covenant with God; this covenant was first given to Abraham and it is extended to all of his offspring. Though the covenant is extended to all of Abraham's offspring, the execution of the covenant is conditional. The covenant would only be valid to those who chose to abide by the covenant. Howard suggests, "While the elements of this covenant would not be broken by God, they remained in effect throughout all generations, each generation of Israelites—indeed, each individual Israelite—had to make its own decision whether to obey the covenant."¹² The Abrahamic Covenant was as much as a corporate act as it was individual decision. In neglecting to continue the circumcision of their children, the first generation collectively rejected God, which in essence voided the Abrahamic Covenant for that generation. Carl F. Keil argues however, because of the murmuring of the people, God sent judgment against Israel to wander and die in the wilderness. God's judgment against Israel suspended the covenant.¹³ Hence, the children born in the wilderness could not be circumcised until God lifted judgment against them. This suggests that the previous generation did not have a choice of whether or not they would circumcise their children. Their rebellion against God disqualified them from engaging in the rituals reserved for the people of God. Only those who are obedient to the command of God could be partakers in the promises of God contained in the Abrahamic Covenant.

While the Abrahamic Covenant no longer collectively applied to Israel, Joshua

¹²Ibid.

¹³Carl Friedrich Keil, *Commentary on the Book of Joshua*, vol. 14 (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1857), 134.

and Caleb's individual resolve to follow the mandates of God spared them from meeting the same fate as the rest of their generation. In the absence of the first generation, Joshua and Caleb, the only two remaining from the generation that left Egypt, play an imperative role in leading the new generation in the will and statutes of God. Joshua and Caleb serve as a reminder to the people of not only the promise of God, but also the error of their ancestors and the punishment for not adhering to God's will.

The influence of the former generation is apparent as we examine the new generation. Much of the actions of the current generation mirrored and had its roots and meaning in that of the former generation. Chapter five commences by looking back at the children of Israel crossing over the Jordan River. Their crossing is reminiscent of their parents' deliverance from Egyptian bondage and the crossing of the Red Sea. Further in the passage, God specifically instructs Joshua to use knives made from flint. The use of flint knives in the Old Testament historical narrative only appears one other time.¹⁴ It is found in Exodus 4:25 and recounts the circumcision of Moses' wife's son. The specific instruction to use knives made of flint has lead scholars to suggest flint knives had special significance, and its purpose was solely for ceremonial circumcision given that other types of material for knives were available. These parallels of the two generations operate as a reminder to the new generation of the unfaltering promise of God to lead them out of bondage into the Promised Land. It encourages the present generation to maintain their faith and belief in the God of Israel.

The Joshua text suggests generational influence is important because it allows current generations to learn from the successes and failures of previous generations. When we take note of the pitfalls that we are subject to by examining others, we put

¹⁴Howard, *The New American Commentary Joshua*, 148.

ourselves in an advantageous position to avoid or prevent experiencing some of the same disappointment.

Before Israel could become a people of God, they had to be circumcised both physically and spiritually. Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible states circumcision was the “surgical removal of the foreskin of the male reproductive organ.”¹⁵ Howard notes the phrase, a second time is not a denotation of a need for two circumcisions, rather, it refers to reinstating the practice of circumcision, which died out with the previous generation that perished in the wilderness.¹⁶

Before the new generation of Israel could inherit the Promised Land, they had to be circumcised. In their present state, they were at enmity with God. Howard states, “The circumcision marks the beginning of Israel’s true identification with the land of Canaan, and it contrasts the present generation of Israelites very starkly with the preceding generation which rebelled against Moses and the Lord.”¹⁷ It is through the second circumcision that Joshua restores Israel to be a people of God. Verse 8 states, “When the circumcising of all the nation was done, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed.” Butler points out the word heal in Hebrew is a derivative of the word life. Anytime man was ill he did not consider himself to be fully alive.¹⁸ Through their circumcision, the nation of Israel had to let God make her sick before she could not only be healed, but she could live.

Along with the physical act of circumcision was a circumcision of the heart. The

¹⁵Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 462.

¹⁶Howard, *The New American Commentary Joshua*, 149.

¹⁷Ibid., 147.

¹⁸Butler, *Word Biblical Commentary: Joshua*, 59.

previous generation's rebellion against God is seen not only in their refusal to circumcise their children in the wilderness, but by their refusal to enter the Promised Land and their complaints to Moses. Their rebellion leads to God sentencing them to wandering in the wilderness for forty years until that generation, those who were twenty and older, died off. The act of circumcision by the children of Israel was actually an act of faith in their God. The two cannot be separated. Along with their ceremonial act of circumcision was a circumcision of the heart where there people pledged their allegiance to God.

Israel realized that faithful service garners blessings. Israel experienced firsthand the blessing of God through the renewal of the Abrahamic Covenant. God erased their shame and named the place Gilgal. Gilgal is a play on the word *gālal*, which means, to roll. In verse 9, God names the location of the circumcision Gilgal because God had rolled away both the scorn of Egypt and Israel's past disobedience.¹⁹ No longer would Egypt be able to talk about how God deserted the nation of Israel and allowed them to wander in the dessert for forty years. The naming of the Gilgal underscores the significance of one's obedience and devotion to God. Because of Israel's faithfulness, God takes away her reproach and sin. Israel starts fresh with a new life and a Promised Land.

Joshua 5:2-9 exemplifies the importance of stripping away anything other than the pure gospel message and the results of obedience. In contrast, 2 Timothy warns about the dangers of adding to the gospel. Paul begins by setting the stage. He starts chapter 4 by setting the tone. He does so by reminding Timothy that he stands in the presence of God the Father and Jesus Christ. The New American Commentary states:

¹⁹Howard, *The New American Commentary Joshua*, 152.

Paul grounded his charge to Timothy in four realities. The first two of these are God the Father and Christ Jesus the Son Summoning Timothy into the majestic presence of the Father and reminding him of Christ's role as judge...Two other realities that pressed Timothy into consistently active commitment were the return of Christ and the eternal kingdom he will establish at that time.²⁰

Paul reminds Timothy of the seriousness of his calling. Paul points out that Timothy's call is not of humanity. It is of God. Timothy represents God in all that he does and says. Paul reminds Timothy that God is ever present in his ministry, for this cause alone; Timothy should be diligent in his duties. Alongside God the Father, is Jesus Christ, and Timothy will one day have to stand before Him and give an account of the ministry, which God has entrusted to his charge.

In the last two realities, Paul grounds his statement in Christ's second coming and His kingdom. Paul moves on to mention Christ appearing and His Kingdom. For Paul the end times were quickly approaching. Christ would soon return. With this hope Paul writes with a sense of urgency for Timothy's ministry. Christ's return and His coming kingdom was an encouragement to Timothy because it signaled the eventual victory that Christ, Timothy, and the universal church would have over the persecutors and heretics in Ephesus. For all practical purposes Timothy had reason to be discouraged. Paul warns Timothy that the times were going to deteriorate even further, but Timothy could take comfort because Christ and His kingdom would soon come. No one, whether dead or alive, would be exempt from judgment.

In light of Timothy being ever present before God, and Jesus Christ, and Christ's second coming and His kingdom, Paul exhorts Timothy to proclaim the message. This is the first of five aorist imperatives contained in verse 2. This first imperative tells what

²⁰Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, *The New American Commentary* vol. 34 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 242.

he is to do. He is to preach. The proceeding four tells how he is to do it.²¹ John MacArthur suggests Timothy's position before God the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Judge is one of five motivating factors as to why Timothy must preach the Word faithfully.²² Timothy is to preach every opportunity he gets; it does not matter if he feels like preaching or whether his audience wants to hear him, he is to proclaim the Word at all times. Proclaiming the Word is not just the actual act of oration before an audience, it also encompasses the example individuals set through the way they live their lives.

In addition to preaching the Word under every condition, Timothy must reprove, rebuke, and exhort. These three commands respectively speak to the intellect, conscious, and will; "Timothy was to correct error by the use of reasoned argument. He was to rebuke a straying conscience whenever the need appeared. He was to give hope to the fainthearted by providing tender encouragement in the face of discouraging opposition."²³ Here, Paul systematically lays out the three spheres of the human makeup that would potentially cause one to error in their beliefs. William Barclay notes the word, "reprove" in verse 2, is the verb form of the noun in 2 Timothy 3:16. Barclay suggests there is a close relationship between what the Word of God does and what preachers of the Word should do.²⁴ If the preacher is the herald of Word of God, and the Word of God reproves, then the preacher's words ought to reprove.

²¹Ibid.

²²John Macarthur, "Preach the Word: Five Compelling Motivations for the Faithful Expositor," *Master's Seminary Journal* 22, no. 2 (September 01, 2011): 173, accessed May 9, 2013, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=ATLA0001881789&site=ehost-live>.

²³Lea and Griffin, *The New American Commentary*, 243.

²⁴William B. Barclay, *A Study Commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2005), 275.

Paul tells Timothy he is to preach in order to reprove, rebuke, and exhort and the manner it is to be done is with patience and teaching. Rebuking without teaching is of no substance. In order to correct, one must rebuke and then point the individual in the right direction with sound biblical doctrine. While the Gospel reproves and rebukes, it also comforts, and so, within every rebuke should be grace.

Another motivating factor as to why Timothy must continue to preach the Word is because listeners would prefer to hear a watered down gospel.²⁵ Instead of listening to convicting messages, the listener would prefer message to make them feel good. The New American commentary suggests there were three features that would develop from the listeners' need for novelty: "listeners would no longer put up with sound doctrine, they would amass teachers to suit their own desires, and they would do this because they wanted only to satisfy the itching in their ears."²⁶ Paul warns Timothy there will be those who will not be satisfied with sound doctrine. Instead they will add false teachers who will please their ears. They will amass motivational speakers and speakers whose whole theology is built on a prosperity gospel.

Talk of sin and the need for repentance will be nonexistent. Sermons will be composed of the newest feel good, do well, and be good messages. The results of verse 3 are given in verse 4. First, the listeners would turn away from hearing the truth of the gospel. Second, they would "turn aside to myths."²⁷ Much to Paul's dismay, he asserts there will be well-meaning Christians who will turn away from sound doctrine and will be carried away with myths. William Barclay suggests, "Our natural selves revolt against

²⁵MacArthur, *Preach the Word*.

²⁶Lea and Griffin, *The New American Commentary*, 244.

²⁷Ibid., 244.

biblical truths.”²⁸ In short, anything that has a tendency to cause discomfort or is convicting, we naturally shy away. We are drawn to those things give us pleasure. Paul outlines the dangers of adding to the gospel. When we add to the gospel we draw away from God. We must maintain sound biblical teaching.

John MacArthur points out in addition to the motivating factors in chapter 4, Timothy is to preach based on the factors which he had previously mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:1-17. MacArthur separates these verses into three additional motivating factors. Timothy is to preach the Word because of “The Danger of the Season (2 Tm 3:1-9); Devotion to Saints (2 Tm 10-14); and the Dynamics of Scripture (2 Tm 3:15-17).”²⁹ Paul insists that Timothy’s resolve to preach the gospel should be greater than ever before. When Timothy takes into account all of his motivating factors, they should push him to preach with conviction and clarity. The motivating factors in chapter three allude to the signs of the time, the example of previous saints, and the authority of scripture.

In 2 Timothy 3:1-9 Paul first suggests Timothy is to preach the Word because of the signs of the time. Paul reminds Timothy that Christ’s return is eminent. However, before His return, times would deteriorate even further. He then proceeds to run down a list in verses 2-9 of what Timothy should expect:

For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid them! For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate silly women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth. As Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these people, of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith, also oppose the truth. But

²⁸Barclay, *A Study Commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy*, 286.

²⁹Macarthur, *Preach the Word*, 165–172.

they will not make much progress, because, as in the case of those two men, their folly will become plain to everyone (2 Tm 3:2-9).

Timothy could expect the situation to become dire. Instead of continuing in sound biblical teaching, heretics would incorporate their own ideology into scripture; ideologies such as Patriotism, nationalism, idolism, and rationalism. The need for the Protestant reformation was a result of the Catholic Church performing indulgence. There was no biblical precedent for indulgence. The practice arose out of a secular practice. Martin Luther felt the need to defect from the German Church because Adolf Hitler stripped the church of pure scripture and replaced it with a form of nationalism. Paul tells Timothy to preach the Gospel. Do not get caught up with new theologies of the time, continue in the doctrine you know and were taught.

Secondly, Paul is to preach the Word because of the example of those who has come ahead of Timothy. Paul uses Himself as a model. He summarizes his resume of persecution. Timothy could take courage in knowing that just as God had delivered Paul from every situation, He would do the same for Timothy. Timothy's faith was to be rooted in the past as he faced the future. Paul was only one of the many cloud of witnesses that Timothy could look to as a constant reminder that God would take care of him. McKenzie asserts, "The past is made alive and powerful for the present so that it can shape the future."³⁰ Timothy could preach the Gospel with boldness because of the example of not only Paul, but because of his mother, grandmother, and every Christian that had come before him. Paul suggests that generational influence gives current generations a model or road map to emulate. Through these models, they can find encouragement to stay the course. As we compare our story to those who have come

³⁰Alyce M. McKenzie, "2 Timothy 1:3-7," *Interpretation* 60, no. 3 (July 2006): 319, accessed February 20, 2013, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials.

before us, we can take heart in knowing that our experiences are not unusual, in fact, that which we are experiencing is to be expected. We, like the generation that preceded us, can endure any challenge that confronts us.

Last, Timothy should be motivated to preach the Gospel because of the authority of scripture. Scripture in itself is powerful. Nothing needs to be added in order for it to do its job. If Timothy would speak the scripture, Paul guarantees Timothy; the scripture would do the rest of the work. It would reprove, rebuke, and exhort. Timothy did not have to worry about trying to come up with additional gimmicks and performing side antics for the scripture to be effective, all he had to do was preach. Paul reminds Timothy that solid, sound preaching is needed. This is the command he gives Timothy. Preach the Word. As a conclusion to the segment, Paul gives Timothy his last directives in 2 Timothy 4:5. Paul contrasts the actions of those Christians who were being lead astray with what should be the response of Timothy.³¹

Timothy was not to be overtaken by heretical thinking. He had a responsibility to maintain his course. Paul uses four imperatives to emphasize this point; “always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully” (2 Tm 4:5). These imperatives all point to the need for perseverance.³² Paul tells Timothy to continue at every cost. The need for Timothy to continue in his ministry becomes even more urgent in light of Paul’s impending death. Paul is bestowing his ministry onto Timothy to continue the work he had started.

³¹Lea and Griffin, *The New American Commentary*, 244.

³²Ibid., 576.

The faithful response to the mandate of God by Israel and the exhortations of Paul to Timothy were nonnegotiable. No middle ground existed. The two parties would either follow completely or not follow at all. Israel's livelihood depended on their faithful response. The preservation of the Gospel was dependent on Timothy. There is much danger in both adding to and stripping away from the scripture. We are not to add or take away from the gospel in our effort to engage the next generation. We cannot bend to social pressures to assimilate to society. We must stand firm in the Word of God. We are to preach the Word of God. More than ever before, this generation is in need of sound doctrine and biblical direction. There is so much, which seeks to distract and derail them. The church must like Timothy, be steadfast and continue to preach the Word. Undoubtly, new religious waves will come and go, but we can be sure the only thing that will stand the test of time is the unadulterated Word of God.

Historical Foundation

Every generation reaches a crossroads in history where they must decide how they will respond to the challenges facing their generation given their religious beliefs. Much of what happens rises out of a sense of discontent and disillusionment in current state of affairs. Time and time again it is a call to return to the biblical foundation on which the church was built. Martin Luther and Dietrich Bonhoeffer give us two examples of a new generation yearning for religious authenticity within the church. Luther, at the age of thirty-four, with his *95 Theses*, begins what we know as the Protestant Reformation. Similarly, at the age of twenty-seven, shortly after Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany, Dietrich Bonhoeffer would speak out against Hitler's Führer Principle which would ultimately lead to the formation of the Confessing Church.

This section will seek to explore how we effectively engage the next generation in ministry in a postmodern culture. Martin Luther and Dietrich Bonhoeffer will be used as models. Only as we use sound doctrine and biblical teaching can we reach the next generation.

Martin Luther was a 16th century theologian credited with beginning of Lutherism and the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther was one of seven children born to Hans and Margaretta Luther on November 10, 1483 in Eisleben in Prussian Saxony.³³ Luther received both his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts Degrees from the University of Erfurt. Originally, Luther's intentions were to pursue a career in law. However, after being caught in the clutches of an intense and frightening thunderstorm in which he thought his life would be taken, he vowed to become a monk if he survived.

In July of 1505, Luther would enter the Augustinian convent at Erfurt. There he vowed, "to live until death in poverty and chastity according to the rules of the holy father, Augustine, to render obedience to Almighty God, to the Virgin Mary, and to the prior of the monastery."³⁴ Through his vow, Luther essentially pledged his allegiance to the Catholic Church. Luther took his vows seriously. He rigorously observed the practices of a monk. Yet, it did not free him from the temptation of sin. Luther's sinful nature haunted him until one of his monastery teachers reminded him of the Article of Forgiveness found in the Apostles' Creed, which stated, the sinner is justified by grace through faith alone.³⁵ Luther's friend, Johann von Staupitz, the Vicar-General of the

³³Philip Schaff and David Schley Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910).

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

Augustinian convents in Germany would also affirm this Article of Forgiveness. Staupitz emphasized the works of Christ and not the deeds of humanity as the source for comfort and peace in the quest for justification from sin. It is from this philosophy that Luther would later build his argument against the sale of indulgences. Luther would use Romans 1:17, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, “The just shall live by faith,” as the basis for his argument. Staupitz would encourage Luther to become a priest and pursue the Doctorate of Divinity Degree. Luther was ordained to the priesthood on May 2, 1507. Staupitz would send for Luther to teach at the University of Wittenberg in 1508. Luther began his career as a professor teaching philosophy, but after he received his Doctorate of Divinity in 1512, Luther would devote the rest of his teaching career to Theology.³⁶ While serving at the university, Luther would assume the role of sub-prior of his convent as well as the position of assistant pastor at St. Mary’s in Wittenburg, Germany.

Justification by faith became Luther’s mantra and overarching theme in his 95 Theses. In his paper, “Introducing the Pastoral Luther,” Timothy J. Wengert suggests the motivation for Luther’s 95 Theses was for the pastoral care of his congregation.³⁷ Wittenburg was a poor town and Luther felt the people were being exploited by the use of indulgences. Pope Leo X granted permission for the sale of indulgences to rebuild St. Peter’s Church in Rome. The sale of indulgences refers to the absolution of sin from earthly punishment on the condition of penitence and payment to the church. Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz used the sale of indulgences for personal profit. He employed Johann

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Timothy J. Wengert, "Introducing the Pastoral Luther," *Lutheran Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (December 01, 2008): 404, accessed April 28, 2013, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=ATLA0001706170&site=ehost-live>.

Tetzel as commissioner. Tetzel preached and sold indulgences throughout Germany playing on the guilt of individuals who wished to escape punishment for themselves and their relatives.

Luther could not stand idly by while Tetzel preached and collected indulgences from the church. Luther found freedom in justification by faith through grace alone. No amount of money could count for the repayment of sins. "As a preacher, a pastor, and a professor, Luther felt it to be his duty to protest against such measures: to be silent was to betray his theology and his conscience."³⁸ Luther knew he must do something. The Pope, Archbishop Albrecht, and Tetzel was profiting off the ignorance of people who in actuality could not afford to buy these indulgences. Luther understood no amount of work or money could act as reparations for sin. Humanity depended solely on the grace through faith, which was the work of Christ. Furthermore, Luther could not find any biblical foundation for the practice. Its origins came out of a custom of Northern and Western barbarians where they would use payment as a form of restitution for an offense. Using this model, in 690 Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury in England would set the precedent for the use of indulgences in the church.³⁹ Essentially the use of indulgences was manufactured by humanity, which in return transferred the practice to the religious sphere.

On October 31, 1517, Luther nailed his *95 Theses* entitled "Disputation to Explain the Virtue of Indulgences" to the door of the church in Wittenberg in an effort bring forth

³⁸Schaff and Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*.

³⁹Ibid.

public discussion on the topics of indulgences.⁴⁰ Luther chose the day October 31 because it was the eve of All Saints Day and parishioners from all over would come to take part in the celebration. Luther's hope was to create a forum for academic discussion around the matter. Unfortunately, no one responded to Luther's letter. This did not deter him. Luther's Theses were copied and disseminated throughout Germany and Europe.

The chief opponents to Luther were Tetzel, Conrad Wimpina, and John Eck. The only argument these men could bring against Luther's 95 Theses was the infallibility of the pope, which would not be established by the Vatican until 1870.⁴¹ Luther's opponents' argument of the infallibility of the pope became the center of the dispute. The question that ensued was, did true authority lie in the scriptures or in the pope? Seeing that Luther was gaining support, Pope Leo X appointed a delegation lead by Silvester Mazzolini also known as Prierias to refute Luther's claims. In October of 1518, Luther was summoned before Cardinal Cajetan, who also known as Thomas de Vio of Gaëta. Cardinal Cajetan compelled Luther to rescind his stands given in his 95 Theses on the sale of indulgences, but Luther stood firm pledging allegiance to God instead of the pope. Cajetan threaten Luther with excommunication.

In another effort to silence the reformer, Pope Leo X sent Karl von Miltitz to plead with Luther. Instead of threatening Luther, Miltitz came bearing a gift. He blamed much of the trouble created by the theses on Tetzel and pleaded with Luther not to divide the Holy Roman church. Miltitz left Luther on good terms with Luther agreeing that he had no intentions of dividing the church.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

The truths between Miltitz and Luther would not last long. Luther would participate in a debate held at Castle of Pleissenburg in Leipzig with Johann Eck and Andreas Karlstadt. Eck, professor of theology at Ingolstadt in Bavaria would argue with Luther on the issue of papacy. “Eck maintained that the Pope was the successor of Peter, and the vicar of Christ by divine right. Luther maintained that Eck’s claim was contrary to the scriptures, to the ancient church, to the Council of Nicaea—the most sacred of all councils.”⁴² According to Eck, the pope had biblical authority because he was a successor to Peter. Luther would err in the debate when he questioned the authority of the councils. Luther suggested the Council of Constance was wrong in its decision to condemn and burn the pre-reformer, Jan Hus. Ultimately Eck would prevail over Luther, asserting that Luther was a heretic.

Luther would lose all hope for reformation in the Catholic Church. He began to believe the pope was the anti-Christ because he was the source of the abuses in the church. Luther worked vigorously to refute the authority of the pope. Luther wrote three works in 1520 to address his concerns; *Address to the German Nobility*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *The “Freedom of a Christian Man.”* These works specifically spoke out against the pope and the Roman church. Robert Rosin author of *Luther at Worms and the Wartburg: Still Confessing* looks at the three works of Luther. In the first work, Rosin points out the purpose of Luther’s writing were to spur the laity to realize they could take an active role in reformation of the church. Rome was not the final authority, and those who were outside of the sacred sphere had something to add to the discourse. Rosin argues that Luther suggests in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* that the sacraments and indulgences was way of keeping people hostage in that the priests

⁴²Ibid.

acted a mediator between God and the people.⁴³ According to Rosin, Luther continues his argument in the *Freedom of a Christian Man*, suggesting that humanity is beholden to no one based on faith, but a servant to all because of love. The premise behind Luther's statement was I Corinthians 9:19; "Though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more." Through these writing Luther built a foundation, which emanated with the people throughout Germany on why change and reform was necessary.

In May of 1520, the Bull of Excommunication, *Exsurge Domine*, was drawn up. This was a decree, which condemned Luther and stripped him of his relationship with the Catholic Church. Pope Leo would give Luther one more opportunity. Within the Bull, Luther was given 120 days to renounce his stands. Luther refused. The pope declared Luther's writings as heretical and ordered his books to be burned. Eck carried out the Bull with very little effort in Rome. However, he was challenged in Northern Germany. Luther had much support in Northern Germany. The abuse of the Catholic Church was more prevalent in northern Germany than any other part of the world. They like Luther felt they were being exploited and they longed to have more of a voice in the church. In response to Luther's books being burned, Luther would burn the decree issued by the pope. In April of 1521, at the Diet of Worms, a formal assembly of Rome, King Charles the V ordered, the Popes Bull to be executed.

After Luther's excommunication, he would continue the reformation of the church. *Rein Evangelium*, or the teaching of pure gospel became the mantra of those who

⁴³Robert Rosin, "Luther at Worms and the Wartburg: Still Confessing," *Concordia Journal* 32, no. 2 (April 01, 2006): 170, accessed April 29, 2013.

followed Luther.⁴⁴ Along the way the Catholic Church had deviated from the scripture being the authority. Practices from outside the sacred realm had invaded the church stripping it of its true identity. The end result was an institution with the Pope at the head of the hierarchical structure of the church.

The church which the German Theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer knew had its origin in the reformation lead by Martin Luther. Much like Luther, recognizing the abuses of the church, Bonhoeffer rallied his generation to actively seek the true purpose of the church. Bonhoeffer rejected Hitler's pseudo-religion, insisting true religion always submitted to a power, that power was God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born along with his twin sister, Sabine, to Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer, formerly Paula nee von Hase, on February 4, 1906 in Breslau, Silesia, which was under German occupation at the time. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's father was a prominent psychiatrist in Germany and would serve as the chair in psychiatry and neurology at the university and director of the hospital for nervous diseases. Being a scientist, Karl Bonhoeffer emphasized the importance of clear and logical thought to his children. Karl Bonhoeffer believed that one's mind must be trained to do so. He challenged them to "follow the evidence and the facts and the logic all the way to the end."⁴⁵ This foundation would aid the Bonhoeffer children in their development. It taught them at an early age how to critically think free of emotion and presuppositions. Bonhoeffer's early training would aide him later in life when he would challenge the ideology of Hitler and the Nazi regime.

⁴⁴Adrian Hastings, *A World History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 246.

⁴⁵Eric Metaxas, *Seven Men And the Secret of Their Greatness* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 92.

Bonhoeffer's mother was a teacher by profession. Untrusting of the German public schools, she took on the responsibility of initially educating her children. The family hired Kathe van Horn to help in the educating of Dietrich, Sabine, and Susi. Though Karl Bonhoeffer considered himself agnostic, and the family seldom-attended church, they were no strangers to the religious tradition. Paula Bonhoeffer took her faith and the religious education of her children seriously. Paula would often read her children Bible stories and she made it a point to hire governesses that were devout Christians to help tend to her children. Both Paula's father, Karl Alfred von Hase and grandfather, Karl August von Hase, were ministers and theologians. Karl Alfred von Hase served as chaplain for Kaiser Wilhelm II in Potsdam and her grandfather; Karl August von Hase was a church historian, professor, and theologian in Jena. Bonhoeffer's grandfather Karl Alfred von Hase asked to be released from his position as chaplain because of his differing of opinion with the emperor.⁴⁶ Wilhelm II insisted on doing all of his own preaching and he considered the working class to be inferior. Karl Alfred von Hase could not in good conscious serve under an emperor with whom he did not agree. The Bonhoeffer family taught the importance of acting on what one believed to their children. Metaxas writes of the Bonhoeffer family, "If one was unprepared to live out what one claimed to believe, then perhaps one did not believe what one claimed after all! So it was at an early age that Dietrich understood that ideas were never mere ideas but the foundations upon which one built one's actions and ultimately one's life. Ideas and beliefs must be tried and tested because one's life might depend on it."⁴⁷ It is these values

⁴⁶Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy: A Righteous Gentile vs. the Third Reich* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 12.

⁴⁷Ibid., 92.

that were instilled in the Bonhoeffer's at an early age that would ultimately give them direction to shape their future in their professional careers.

At the age of twelve, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's brother, Walter, was wounded and killed in World War I. Author Eric Metaxas suggests the death of Walter was a contributing factor to Bonhoeffer decision to pursue theology as a profession at age thirteen.⁴⁸ In 1923, at the age of seventeen, Bonhoeffer began his studies in Tübingen. During his second semester, he had the opportunity to study in Rome; for Bonhoeffer, Rome had a special significance. His great grandfather had visited Rome twenty times over his lifetime. It was Bonhoeffer's trip to Rome, which would enlighten him as to what it meant to be the church. Rome was the starting point of what would later become the launching point for his doctoral dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio*, and his post graduate work, *Act and Being*.⁴⁹ When Bonhoeffer returned from Rome he enrolled at Berlin University.

In Berlin, there were a number of professors who influenced Bonhoeffer; of those, Bonhoeffer most looked forward to having an opportunity to study under Adolf von Harnack. Harnack was one of the foremost authorities in the historical-critical method during the 19th and 20th centuries. Though Harnack's liberal views conflicted with the more conservative Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Bonhoeffer held Harnack in high esteem. Bonhoeffer would enroll in a number of Harnack's seminars as well as engage him outside of the classroom.⁵⁰ However, no one had a greater influence on Bonhoeffer than

⁴⁸Eric Metaxas, "Bonhoeffer" (lecture, An Evening with Eric Metaxas, Paul W. Powell Chapel, Truett Seminary, Waco, April 3, 2013).

⁴⁹_____. *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, 53.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 61.

Karl Barth. Karl Barth challenged Adolf von Harnack and his liberal theology. Barth “countered liberalism by emphasizing the changelessness of God and His Word.”⁵¹ For Barth, the Bible was a living document. It was the inerrant Word of God that contained eternal truths. Bonhoeffer believed both philosophies had merit. Neither was mutually exclusively. His doctoral dissertation would attempt to marry the two philosophies.

In 1927 at the age of twenty-one, Bonhoeffer would defend his dissertation and obtain his doctorate. In his dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer would try to combine the liberal and Barthian ideas as he answered the question, “What is the church?” Before he finished his doctorate however, Bonhoeffer needed to fulfill his theological requirement of working in a parish. Bonhoeffer chose to work under Reverend Karl Meuman as youth pastor at Grunewald parish church.⁵² Bonhoeffer formed the Thursday Circle, a reading and discussion group from the Sunday school class he taught. Metaxas writes, “Bonhoeffer did it of his own accord; it had no connection to his church obligations. But he felt it vitally important to train up the next generation of young men.”⁵³ Still in training himself, Bonhoeffer understood the need to develop young men who would continue in his religious tradition. Bonhoeffer would engage the young men in discussions on politics, religion, and ethics. Bonhoeffer also sought to expose the group by attending cultural events. From there Bonhoeffer spent two years working in Barcelona, Spain working as an assistant vicar.

⁵¹Michael Van Dyke, *Radical Integrity: The Story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Pub., 2001), 34.

⁵²Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, 63.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 64.

Bonhoeffer's studies would lead him to Union Theological Seminary in New York. While he was not necessarily impressed with the theological education in America, Bonhoeffer had an interest in studying race relations. Shortly after he arrived in America, Bonhoeffer visited the Negro Centers of Life and Culture in Harlem and he did much research into the civil rights struggle.⁵⁴ While in New York, Bonhoeffer befriended Frank Fisher. Fisher invited Bonhoeffer to Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. At Abyssinian, Bonhoeffer was enthralled with the Afro centric style of worship. It was at Abyssinian Church that Bonhoeffer experienced men and women who worshiped a God that was real and not just a theological idea.⁵⁵ Their Pastor, Adam Clayton Powell Sr., encouraged his congregation to live out their faith—"not to just have a genuine relationship with Jesus but also to translate it into action in their lives, to care for the poor and do the other things that Jesus urged his followers to do."⁵⁶ The church, congregation, and pastor struck a chord with Bonhoeffer. For the next six months, Bonhoeffer would not only attend church at Abyssinian almost every week, but he immersed himself into the daily activity of the church, teaching Sunday school, and a women's Bible study group. It could be that Abyssinian reminded him of what his parents instilled in him at an early age: one's beliefs should lead to action. His experience at Abyssinian was the first time Bonhoeffer had ever truly seen his religion lived out.

Bonhoeffer returned to Berlin and took a position at Berlin University as a professor of Systematic Theology. Upon his return to Berlin, Bonhoeffer's understanding

⁵⁴Clifford J. Green, "Bonhoeffer at Union: Critical Turning Points: 1931-1939," ATLA Religion Database, January 1, 2010, accessed March 15, 2013, EBSCO.

⁵⁵Metaxas, *Seven Men And the Secret*, 97.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

of religion had been drastically altered. No longer was the Bible just an historical document, but for him the purpose of studying the Bible was to get to the God behind the text. “The experience could not be merely intellectual but must also be personal and real.”⁵⁷ German theology had always been understood to be an academic and intellectual exercise, through Bonhoeffer’s experience in Harlem, he was introduced to a God that impacted the lives of Christians on a daily basis, this God offered hope and compelled Christian to live out their faith. Bonhoeffer’s days in Harlem at the Abyssinian Baptist Church affected him in such a way that he, henceforth from his tenure there, taught his students how to pray and how to experience a real God outside the bounds of academia.

Due to World War I and the failing German economy, discontent in Germany was growing. No longer was Germany a world power. Their economy was in ruin and the success they knew under their Kaiser would not transfer to the new democratic government that was instituted after World War I. It was these conditions, which helped give rise to Adolf Hitler. Hitler portrayed himself as the one person who could restore Germany to her former glory. Hitler maintained Germany needed a strong leader; they needed someone who could bring them out of their state of despondency. He called it the Führer Principle. Bonhoeffer was vehemently against Hitler and his philosophy. Bonhoeffer understood “true authority must, by definition, be submitted to a higher authority—which is to say God—and true leadership must be servant leadership”⁵⁸ Two days after Hitler became chancellor; Bonhoeffer took to the radio to refute Hitler’s assertions. However, the people did not heed his warnings.

⁵⁷Ibid., 99.

⁵⁸Ibid., 101.

Hitler would eventually infiltrate the German Church. Hitler and the Nazi party would expel all Jews from the church and strip the church of anything remotely resembling Jewish tradition including the entire Old Testament. Hitler would choose Ludwig Müller to lead the church. Müller would assert the idea of grace was “un-German.”⁵⁹ “Bonhoeffer knew that true Christians in Germany had to stand against the nazified state church of Adolf Hitler.”⁶⁰ In response to the current condition of the German church, Bonhoeffer countered by forming the Confessing Church. In May of 1934, The Barmen Declaration was composed. The Declaration affirmed its grounding in scripture and condemned the *bastardized theology* the German church now ascribed to under the direction of Müller. For Bonhoeffer the formation of the Confessing Church was not secession from the German Church. He felt the German church under Hitler had, itself, succeeded from the true Christian church and so his intentions were to distance himself from this pseudo-church movement which paraded itself as the German church.

In 1935, Bonhoeffer started an illegal seminary in the Confessing Church. His focus was on developing seminarians, which would be true Disciples of Christ. The seminary emphasized a devotional life, prayer, and studying and meditating on the scriptures. From his time at the seminary, the book, *Life Together* was birthed. *Life Together* was somewhat of an instruction manual for Christians. In the book, Bonhoeffer addresses the key elements necessary of Christianity. Bonhoeffer commences by defining that “Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.”⁶¹ In Christ

⁵⁹Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, 172.

⁶⁰ Metaxas, *Seven Men And the Secret*, 102.

⁶¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer and John W. Doberstein, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1954), 21.

we find our identity. We are because, Christ is. Humanity is nothing in and of itself. Righteousness is alien to humanity left to their devices. Humanity needs an outside source; she needs others to speak the Word of God to her, and so God uses other men and women to exhort and encourage fellow Christians in the faith. This fellowship is community, and, in community, we find that we cannot separate ourselves from each other because it is through the other that we find salvation and that we find Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer emphasizes the necessity of corporate and individual devotion. Through devotion we learn the scripture and the scripture teaches us how to pray. He continues by addressing how Christians in a community should act in relation to themselves and other others.

The second book Bonhoeffer wrote while at the seminary was, *The Cost of Discipleship*. In *The Cost of Discipleship* Bonhoeffer combats the idea of *cheap grace*. Bonhoeffer states, “Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”⁶² In essence, cheap grace does not require any action on behalf of the individual. Cheap grace finds it worth only in the works of Christ. Instead Bonhoeffer promotes what he terms, *costly grace*. Bonhoeffer states, “Costly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus, it comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart. Grace is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him.”⁶³ Costly grace requires we take a stand on our convictions. The grace which Christ gives costs, it calls

⁶²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1995), 45.

⁶³Ibid.

humanity out of their comfort zones give up all you have to follow Christ. Metaxas writes, “Bonhoeffer felt that to fight evil, one must train Christians how to pray, how to worship God, and how to actually behave as though these things were true.”⁶⁴ For Bonhoeffer standing up to Hitler was an example of costly grace. Bonhoeffer knew it was a risky venture, but if he were to call himself a true disciple of Christ it was not only necessary, but also essential.

Hitler would shut down the seminary. However, Bonhoeffer continued to teach young men underground for some time. Bonhoeffer was committed to investing in the next generation who too would have an obligation to oppose Hitler by teaching and preaching sound doctrine and biblical principles. Eventually, Hitler and the Gestapo would put an end to the seminary, which went underground for the sake of its survival.

With World War II on the horizon, Bonhoeffer was frustrated and running out of options of how to combat Hitler and the new Nazi lead German Church; he retreated to America. However, after arriving, he soon realized that he had made a mistake in leaving Germany. Less than a month into his stay in America, he returned home.

He began to work as an Abwehr agent. An Abwehr agent was a position within Hitler’s government, and, though it appeared that Bonhoeffer was working for the Third Reich, he was actually a double agent. As an Abwehr, Bonhoeffer had the capability of traveling to neutral countries outside of Germany. It was his responsibility to let the Allies know there was a movement inside Germany working to rid itself of Adolf Hitler and his regime. While Bonhoeffer successfully infiltrated the Third Reich, it did not come without consequences. His reputation in the Confessing Church would be ruined

⁶⁴Metaxas, *Seven Men And the Secret of Their Greatness*, 104.

because he could tell no one of his true mission. Bonhoeffer felt he was justified in his work because he was doing the will of God.

In 1942, the Gestapo arrested Bonhoeffer for suspicion of plotting to smuggle Jews out of Germany to Switzerland through the Abwehr. Bonhoeffer was taken to Tegel Military Prison in Berlin. While in prison, an attempt to assassinate Hitler, known as the Valkyrie plot failed, and the conspiracy to execute him was exposed. Hitler fiercely sought out those who were responsible. Thousands were arrested and tortured. It was during this time that Bonhoeffer's name came up as one of the conspirators. In Gestapo custody, Bonhoeffer would make his way to the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp where he was hanged on April 9, 1945, but against Hitler would continue. On April 23, 1945 the Allies would invade Flossenbürg and Hitler would commit suicide ending his reign of terror.

Despite the outlook, in every generation there have been men and women who have taken up the cause of religious purity. In each instance, it was a call to return to the initial teachings of the church fathers—a call to sound scripture in the way that they live their life, but not in a way where they are bound by practicing religion. Adrian Hastings has interesting commentary regarding Luther and the reformation. He states, “Every German humanist who was older than Luther finally backed away from the Reformation as a final theological position and did not ultimately commit to the evangelical cause. Their old ties to the Roman church seem to have been too strong.”⁶⁵ Could it be the call for strong scriptural teaching and a sound doctrine is always emanating from the next generation of believers? Could it be the issue not with the next generation, but with the

⁶⁵Robert Rosin, "Luther at Worms and the Wartburg: Still Confessing," *Concordia Journal* 32, no. 2 (April 01, 2006):170, accessed April 29, 2013, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN= ATLA0001561100&site=ehost-live>.

church as an institution laden with bureaucracy? We learn through both Luther and Bonhoeffer that even in the face of dismal days the church must continue with sound biblical doctrine. The Word of God is always relevant; it is always speaking and giving revelation and the church must stand firm on its beliefs.

Theological Foundation

The question of what is the church is an age-old question that church fathers down throughout history have tried to answer, the nature, and purpose of the church changes with our understanding of what the church is. Questions such as, what does the church look like? Who is a part of the church? What is the structure of the church? All rest on our understanding of the church. Many different explanations have been given in an effort to explain the church. In this section, a brief overview as to how the church has been viewed throughout church history will be discussed. Secondly, this section will try to elucidate the meaning of the church in light of the theologian John Wesley through two themes of holiness and grace.

Ignatius along with many of the early church fathers spoke of the visible church when referring to the church. Ignatius' viewed as a part of Christ, as the body is to the head.⁶⁶ For Ignatius the church spanned throughout the entire world. While there were many local congregations, there was one Universal or Catholic Church. John Norman Davidson Kelley asserts in his book, *Early Christian Doctrines* "The church was regarded as the new, authentic Israel which has inherited the promises which God made to the old."⁶⁷ This Universal Church which Ignatius and Justin Martyr understood was

⁶⁶J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (New York, NY: Continuum, 2011), 189.

⁶⁷Ibid., 190.

made up of God's elect. God's elect included not only Jews but also all those who were considered a Christian. The Jew and Gentile alike, and were a part of the Universal Church.

Like Ignatius, Tertullian views the church as universal. He believes the church is the residence of the Holy Spirit. It is the *domina mater ecclesia* or mother of Christians. Tertullian suggests there is a direct correlation with the church being the mother and God the Father of the Christian. If the church is not the mother of the Christian, then God cannot be the Christian's Father. Tertullian viewed the church as pure and undefiled and that it was set-aside for those who were righteous. Tertullian's view of the church placed a heavy emphasis on the church as an institution. The emphasis of the church as an institution would assure the prosperity and longevity of the church. Tertullian's view of the church made it impossible for one to claim to be a Christian without being a part of the local church.

Pope Callistus would help usher in a new period of thinking about the church with the introduction of reforms by penance. Callistus argued that both sinners and saints should be able to exist together. To illustrate his point, Pope Callistus would use the parable of the wheat and the tares. This thinking was a dynamic shift from that of the church being a place of God's elect who were altogether holy and righteous so much so that Tertullian viewed Pope Callistus theology as heretical. The implications of Pope Callistus opened an avenue for all to be included in the church, even those who committed sins that were considered to be unpardonable. Pope Callistus insured the maintenance of the church as an institution with the admittance of sinners. Pope Callistus

theology threatened the very core of Tertullian's image of the church. No longer could the church be considered altogether holy and undefiled, without blemish or spot.

While most theologians would concentrate on the visible church, Augustine of Hippo begins to differentiate between the visible and invisible church. Within his book, *City of God*, Augustine speaks of two cities, which are representatives of the earthly church and heavenly church:

Let these and similar answers (if any fuller and fitter answers can be found) be given to their enemies by the redeemed family of the Lord Christ, and by the pilgrim city of King Christ. But let this city bear in mind, that among her enemies lie hidden those who are destined to be fellow citizens, that she may not think it a fruitless labor to bear what they inflict as enemies until they become confessors of the faith. So, too, as long as she is a stranger in the world, the city of God has in her communion, and bound to her by the sacraments, some who shall not eternally dwell in the lot of the saints. Of these, some are not now recognized; others declare themselves, and do not hesitate to make common cause with our enemies in murmuring against God, whose sacramental badge they wear. These men you may today see thronging the churches with us, tomorrow crowding the theatres with the godless. But we have the less reason to despair of the reclamation even of such persons, if among our most declared enemies there are now some, unknown to themselves, who are destined to become our friends. In truth, these two cities are entangled together in this world, and intermixed until the last judgment effects their separation.⁶⁸

Augustine asserts the two cities are invariable intermixed. The earthly city, that we are able to see, is composed of saints and sinners alike. The heavenly city is composed of all saints living and dead who God shall call for at the end of time. Within the earthly city are men and women who profess to be a part of the church; they hold positions, observe the holy days, and partake in the ordinance of the church. However, in reality they are enemies of the true church, The Heavenly City of God. In the same manner, there are individuals who through our reason, we would exclude from that city of God who will ultimately be partakers of the City of God. Augustine claims only God

⁶⁸Kevin Knight, ed., *Church Fathers: City of God, Book I* (St. Augustine) (2009), Chapter 35, accessed October 10, 2013, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120101.htm>.

knows who is a part of the true city of God and for now, both those who and are not must dwell together. At judgment day God will ultimately separate the sinners and saints.

Augustine's writings would be very influential in helping to shape the thought of many of the church fathers that would come after him. John Calvin builds on Augustine's premise of true and nominal Christians. More than any other theologian of his day, he clearly defines what the visible and invisible church means.

The church is used in the sacred Scriptures in two senses. Sometimes when they mention 'the Church' they intend that which is really such in the sight of God (*quae revera est coram Deo*), into which none are received but those who by adoption and grace are the children of God, and by the sanctification of the Spirit are the true members of Christ. And then it comprehends not only the saints at any one time resident on earth, but all the elect who have lived from the beginning of the world.

But the word 'Church' is frequently used in the Scriptures to designate the whole multitude dispersed all over the world, who profess to worship one God and Jesus Christ, who are initiated into his faith by baptism, who testify their unity in true doctrine and charity by a participation of the sacred supper, who consent to the word of the Lord, and preserve the ministry which Christ has instituted for the purpose of preaching it. In this Church are included many hypocrites, who have nothing of Christ but the name and appearance; many persons, ambitious, avaricious, envious, slanderous, and dissolute in their lives, who are tolerated for a time, either because they cannot be convicted by a legitimate process, or because discipline is not always maintained with sufficient vigor.

As it is necessary therefore to believe that Church which is invisible to us, and known to God alone, so this Church, which is visible to men, we are commanded to honor, and to maintain communion with it.⁶⁹

Immediately, Calvin differentiates the way in which the word church is used within scriptures. He suggests, first, there is the church that only God can see. This church is composed of every individual who has been adopted into the true family of God; those who have been both justified and sanctified through the grace of God. This

⁶⁹Philip Schaff, "Constitution And Discipline Of The Church Of Geneva," *History of the Christian Church* (New York; NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1858), WORDsearch CROSS E-book.

church includes all who are living, have lived, and will live who have been engrafted into the family of God.

Calvin also asserts, the word church connotes every fellowship on earth that claims to be a part of the body of Christ. Calvin then proceeds to name certain marks of the church; they profess to worship one God, they have partaken in baptism, they observe communion, and even faithfully preach and teach the word of God. Yet, within this church are many who have not been sanctified; individuals who do not bear the fruits of the spirit and are slaves to their flesh. Though the church, which we see, the visible church is imperfect, God requires true Christians to reverence and take part in it. One cannot be a partaker in the invisible church without being connected to the earthly church. God alone knows who is a part of the true church. While fault may lie within the visible church the true Christian's hope is not in that which is seen, but that which is unseen.

Calvin would not be the last church father to write or even try to define the church. John Wesley takes to task the process of defining the church. Wesley's focused his energies more on practical theology. Instead of having systematic volumes of writings, much of Wesley's writings are in the forms of letters and sermons. It is from these letters and sermons that we begin to understand Wesley's concept of the church.

In his sermon, "Of the Church" John Wesley takes on the task of trying to define the term the church. He notes the term church is very ambiguous. On one end it can refer to "a building or institution, set aside for public worship" and on the other end it refers to

“a congregation, or body of people, united together in the service of God.”⁷⁰ While the term the church can refer to a physical structure or a body of people, Wesley focuses on what it means to be the church as a “body of people, united together in the service of God.” Much of the study of ecclesiology had focused the church as an institution. The importance of the church as an institution where people gather to experience God’s grace cannot be negated. Wesley would argue, to understand the church one must have an accurate view of the church as an institution and a body of people, ignoring either aspect of the church miscasts the identity of the church.

The church as a body of Christ at the most basic level is composed of individuals that come together under a common belief and faith in God. Wesley asserts the church can be “taken indifferently for any number of people, how small or great however.”⁷¹ Whether it is a congregation of two, twenty congregations of two hundred people, or 2 million people, all can be considered the church. The term the church has the ability to describe a small band of believers as well as the Universal Church, which is made up of every believer on earth. It is with this in mindset that Wesley defines the church as “all the persons in the universe who God hath so called out of the world as to entitle them to the preceding character, as to be one body, united by one Spirit; having one faith, one hope, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all.”⁷² Wesley definition of the church is very broad and inclusive. He does not relegate the meaning of the word church to a particular sect or denomination; he defines

⁷⁰John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford*, vol. VI (London, England: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), 392, accessed September 30, 2013, doi:<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00076196/00006/1j>.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., 396.

the church in such a way that it comprises everyone, Methodist, Lutherans, as well as Catholics, and every other Christian denomination on earth. Wesley suggests the church is limited to an institution but the true church is made individuals united by one Spirit.

Wesley's idea of the church being the people of God is crucial because it places emphasis on the community of believers instead of the institution. Such an emphasis on the community of believers instead of the institution empowers the believer because the believer acknowledges that the efficacy of the church is not relegated to a building or particular domination, but its power lies within the heart and spirit of the community. The ramification of Wesley's theology suggests that the church could be any place as long as there was a congregation united in one spirit.

There are differing opinions on the effectiveness of Wesley's doctrine of the Church. James Charlesworth, The George L. Collord Professor of New Testament Language and Literature and director of the Dead Sea Scrolls Project at Princeton Theological Seminary, suggests Wesley's definition leaves room to "explore the meaning of the church in a new millennium filled with new challenges."⁷³ The meaning of the church is ever evolving. The lack of rigidity in the definition given by Wesley allows the church to explore new possibilities of what it means to be the church in a changing culture. On the other hand, William Abraham accuses Wesley's doctrine of the church to be unstable because he does not address many theological issues.⁷⁴ Abraham even suggests that Wesley's preoccupation on the individual as the church instead of the

⁷³S. T. Kimbrough, *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 66.

⁷⁴William J. Abraham, *Wesley for Armchair Theologians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 117.

institution runs the danger of moving the Christian away from the organized church. On some level, Abraham argues whenever the emphasis is taken away from the institution, it allows the individual to pull away from the church as an organization. Abraham would suggest Wesley minimizes the importance of the church as an institution.

Juxtaposed to this opinion, author Kenneth Collins believes Wesley's theology of the church "presupposes a community of saints that not only bears the gospel story throughout history, but also forms the primary context for the instantiation of holy love in the newly transformed."⁷⁵ Collins argues that in his understanding of Wesley, community or the church is necessary for believers to come and grow in their belief as they pursue holiness. No one can do it alone. Each individual story or quest for holiness exists only as a part of the larger community's story of faith. Whether the formation a community or church is done consciously or unconscious, it is necessary because it is only being connected to like minded believers that we are encouraged in our Christian life and we are challenged to go beyond our finite understanding of how we go about living holy. The development of the Christian is in direct relation to the community, which he/she join themselves to. Though Wesley emphasizes the individual, Collins suggests Wesley believed it was essential for each Christian to be connected to others.

Unlike many theologians, Wesley does not systematically develop a doctrine of the church. James Charlesworth and Richard P. Heitzenrater point out Wesley's understanding and definition of the church directly comes from Article XIX of the Church of England: "The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in

⁷⁵Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), Kindle, 237.

which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered.”⁷⁶

This definition of church encompasses two aspects. Richard P. Heitzenrater suggests the definition gives a view of what the church is and what it does.

IS—a congregation of people

DOES—the true word is preached, and the Sacraments are duly administered⁷⁷

Article XIX suggests the church is a group of people united by faith to each other through Christ. In addition the word of God must be preached and the Sacraments are administered; if either of these requisites is lacking it no longer is the church. Wesley does not disagree with this definition; but he suggests the church is much more. According to Article XIX, the Church of Rome along with others would not be considered a part of the church; it is with this in mind that Wesley suggests the common denominator of the Body of Christ are they all have “one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all.”⁷⁸ For Wesley the church transcended denominations and even religious practices. The keys of the church were real Christians, men and women who sought to live a holy life. According to W. J. Abraham, Wesley thought about the church less as an institution and more in terms of believers united in faith to Christ, which in turn unites them to every believer.⁷⁹ Wesley viewed the church as a living-breathing organism. More than ecclesiology, Wesley was concerned with pneumatology. According to Wesley the church receives its identity from pneumatology

⁷⁶Charles M. Guilbert, "The Online Book of Common Prayer," The Online Book of Common Prayer, Historical Documents of the Church; XIX Of the Church, accessed October 03, 2013, doi:<http://www.bcponline.org/>.

⁷⁷S. T. Kimbrough, *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 121.

⁷⁸Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*.

⁷⁹Abraham, *Wesley for Armchair Theologians*, 120.

not ecclesiology: the Holy Spirit not only works to bring people to Christ and united them with other believers, but the Holy Spirit also works to form the church as an institution. Since the Holy Spirit works to draw believers together as the body of Christ where it forms the church as an institution, the Holy Spirit also works to draw us into the “life and work of the church as an institution.”⁸⁰ It is the Holy Spirit that creates a living faith. Wesley saw the Christian church, both the institution as well as the body of Christ as a work initiated by the Holy Spirit.

In affirming the church, Wesley refers to the Apostles Creed and its statement of being the Holy Catholic Church.⁸¹ Wesley believed the most defining characteristic of the church, its being holy, had been ignored in many of the attempts to define the church. It is with this conviction that Wesley states; “The church is called holy, because it is holy, because members thereof are holy though in differing degrees, as He that called them holy.”⁸² Holy is what the church is, but it is also what we as communities of believers are striving to obtain. On one hand there is actuality of the church and on the other hand there is the possibility of holiness for the believer made possible only through the Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Holy Spirit which makes holiness a reality our lives. Wesley's understanding of the church being Catholic must not be confused with the Church of Rome. In writing The Apostles Creed, the Church fathers understood the word Catholic to mean universal. Charlesworth suggests the charge of the church, as an institution is to help and nurture individuals in their quest for holiness.

⁸⁰Ibid. 121.

⁸¹"Apostles' Creed," Apostles' Creed, accessed October 09, 2013, doi:<http://www.ccel.org/creeds/apostles.creed.html>.

⁸²Kimbrough, *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology*, 82.

Holiness is the end goal of the Christian life, but Kenneth Collins suggests the holiness, which Wesley actually speaks is more complex than it appears at first sight. He even argues the axial theme of Wesley theology is not just holiness, but holiness and grace. Each component of the axial theme, holy and grace is actually simplified. Whenever, Wesley uses the term holy, he is actually referring to holy love. In a like manner, when Wesley uses the term grace, he is speaking of free/co-operant grace.

In a number of Wesley's writings, such as his letter to John Smith in 1745 and his sermon, "Justification by Faith," Wesley uses the terminology, holy love.⁸³ Collins suggests that each component is significant and by understanding the two words to be synonymous, we misinterpret its meaning. The terms holiness and love, as Wesley employed them, represent two distinct classes of words: the one indirectly relational, expressing the quality of a relationship; the other directly so. Thus, Wesley's view of holiness as purity represents a qualitative designation that reveals the integrity and the beauty of the relations of love. "Holiness is covered glory," Wesley notes, "and glory is uncovered holiness."⁸⁴

Holy is what God is. Holy separates itself from that which is not holy. If it is united with something or someone that is not Holy, Holy becomes corrupted or tainted. This attribute of God removes the Creator from being able to be in relationship with humanity. Holiness moves God inward because only God alone is Holy. God's love, divine love "is outgoing, embracing, and inclusive. It is "the movement which goes-out-of-oneself, which stoops down to that which is below: it is the self-giving, the self-

⁸³Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, Kindle, 237.

⁸⁴Ibid.

communication of God."⁸⁵ God's love first draws the Creator towards flawed humanity. It seeks communion and fellowship with profane men and women. God's love has justified humanity through the gift of the Only Begotten Son, Christ who serves as the propitiation for the sins of humanity through faith.

Conversely love is at the root of Holiness for humanity. Wesley states, "But we must love God, before we can be holy at all; this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God, till we know he loves us."⁸⁶ Holiness comes only as a result of our love for God. Humanity's desire to be holy is directly related to their love for God. Through revelation of the Holy Spirit we first experience God's love for us. We then are able to understand what love is and in turn we are able to love the Creator. We come to the understanding of love through God's love for us.

Kenneth Collins first half of Wesley's axial theme is holy love. Holy love lay in tension with each other. On one hand, holiness separates God from humanity, it is inward moving. On the other hand, God's loves seeks fellowship with humanity. The creator's love informs us giving us revelation on the nature of love, which enables us to love our Maker. Through the Holy Spirit our love pushes us to be holy. The Holy Spirit makes holiness a possibility.

Just as God's love for us pushes us pushes the creator to have communion with the creation, the love, which we learn from God pushes the created to be in community with others. The love, which we experience from the Creator and the love, which in turn exude, is an outward moving love, which seeks the fellowship of other who has been

⁸⁵Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1950), 187.

⁸⁶Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*.

recipients of that same love. Whenever the receipts of Gods love come together, there the church is formed according to Wesley.

The second half of Collins axiel theme is grace or free and co-operant grace. Wesley understood grace as a dichotomy containing not only a divine aspect but a human aspect as well. According to Wesley, God gives free grace to the believer, grace does not in any wise depend either on the good works or righteousness of the receiver; not on anything he has done, or anything he is." Grace is a result of God's unmerited love towards us. Through grace, God acts favorably towards those who are unworthy. We do not deserve grace, we cannot earn grace, but God freely gives it to us. Grace, God's unmerited favor towards humanity is given to us out of the Creator's sheer love. Ephesians 2:8 remind us, "For it is by grace we are save through faith, It is not of ourselves, rather it is the gift of God." Wesley would argue that the Christian has a responsibility to respond to God once they have received God's free gift. This is what Wesley understands as co-operant grace.

Wesley's understanding of co-operant grace is in direct contradiction to the present Protestant community and the theology of John Calvin. Calvin asserts, whenever, the actions of humanity are intermingled with the grace of God, the result is a "corruption of grace."⁸⁷ For Calvin, to say that humanity has a responsibility to respond to grace of God takes away from the efficacy of grace provided by God. It would suggest that for God's grace alone is not sufficient for humanity, that humanity plays a role in their fate. Calvin thought the idea of Christians participating in the work of God through grace was abysmal. Grace was the work of God alone.

⁸⁷Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), Kiindle, 1343.

Juxtaposed, Wesley would argue once we receive God's gift we are now enabled and empowered to respond to God's grace. While it is not by works that we are saved, Wesley reminds the Christian "faith without works is dead."⁸⁸ In essence it is essential to put action behind what we say and believe. Abraham asserts, "faith that fails to express itself in inward disposition and outward behavior is mere assent, mere dead orthodoxy dressed up as the faith of the church."⁸⁹ Faith and works are the by-products of grace. Once the Christian has received grace, his/her response to grace becomes an involuntary reaction. Grace pushes the Christian to works. Though grace is free, it is not cheap. Once the Christian realizes that it cost God quite a bit, then it is the Christian's responsibility to respond to the great price God paid for them. For Wesley the ability to respond to the grace of God is in itself an act of God's grace.

Grace is not some abstract idea, but grace is concrete. Collins quotes Wesley as he states, "The means of grace are outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end—to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."⁹⁰ Wesley suggests that we are able to experience God's grace through things. Wesley believed certain practices were necessary to help draw the Christian into a life of holiness. On one level there were works of piety: "The chief means are prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation; searching the scriptures (which implies reading, hearing, and meditating thereon) and receiving The Lord's Supper, eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of him; and these we

⁸⁸Jas 2:14.

⁸⁹Abraham, *Wesley for Armchair Theologians*, 77.

⁹⁰Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, Kindle, 257.

believe to be ordained of God as the ordinary channels of conveying his grace to the souls of men.”⁹¹ Wesley understood these practices as methods, which increases humanities’ awareness and sensitivity to God. The more that we immerse ourselves in the discipline of the study of the Word, the more we remind ourselves the debt God paid for us through the observance of the lord supper the more should want to seek to live holy. Acts of piety are all inward orientated meaning they cause for reflection and deal with the Christian self.

Wesley also suggests that beyond works of piety, there are works, which are outward oriented, which are works of mercy. In addition to being absorbed in our Spiritual needs, Wesley believes Christians has a responsibility to meet the needs of others. He coins this thought as acts of mercy. Acts of mercy include but are not limited to: feeding the hungry, relieving the stranger, and visiting the sick. Acts of mercy are those acts that look past self and are designed in an effort to help or minister to someone else. Wesley would argue when we participate in acts of mercy not only do we bestow God’s grace on those who we see to, but also we receive a measure of God’s grace as we go. In performing both acts of piety and acts of mercy we grow in our knowledge and love of God.

We should not be mistaken; the means of grace is not an end all in themselves.

Wesley is clear that there is no efficacy in the acts without God:

Before you use any means let it be deeply impressed on your soul: There is no power in this. It is in itself a poor, dead empty thing: separate from God, it is a dry leaf, a shadow... Settle this in your heart, the *opus operatum*, the mere work done, profiteth nothing; that there is no power to save but in the Spirit of God, no merit

⁹¹Abraham, *Wesley for Armchair Theologians*, 77.

but in the blood of Christ; that consequently even what God ordains conveys no grace to the soul if you trust not in him alone.⁹²

Our works does not bring about salvation. They do not justify us. The works in and of themselves have no power. Pious actions are worth nothing without our love for God being at the center of all that we do. So Wesley would remark, it is by grace that we are saved and not by works, but the grace granted to us from God should elicit works.

Wesley was adamant in his position of grace eliciting a response from the Christian. In his mind, this response did not negate the sufficiency of the work of Christ; rather it highlighted the perpetual need for humanity to pursue holiness. The traditional view of justification by faith alone did not necessitate a response to live holy. Justification by faith alone did not compel humanity to rid themselves of their vices. Wesley's insistence on humanity's need respond to grace was due in part to Wesley's theology of grace as it relates to the church suggests that individuals should be engaged in the work and ministry of the church as an institution. Ministry is what Wesley coins works of piety. At the root of ministry in the church, the goal ought to be to meet the needs of others with our love for God being the motivating factor. As we engage ourselves in ministry we grow in grace and holiness.

Wesley uses grace and holiness as aspects of the church to define the church. According to Wesley, without grace and holiness it is impossible to be a part of the church. Grace is what draws humanity to God and into the church, through the means of grace, humanity participates in works of piety and works of mercy. These works helps to produce holiness within the Christian. For Wesley these works are necessary to remain justified by grace.

⁹²Ibid., 115.

The Church fathers each had their view of what constituted a church. Some of their ideas coincided with each other; other views conflicted. However, no one view completely explained or defined the church. Avery Dulles in *Models of the Church* records the Vatican II adopted the title “The Mystery of the Church” for the first chapter of the schema of the church. Dulles suggests:

The church is not fully intelligible to the finite mind of man, and that the reason for this lack of intelligibility is not the poverty but the richness of the church itself. Like other supernatural mysteries, the Church is known by a kind of co-naturality. We cannot fully objectify the Church because we are involved in it; we know it through a kind of inter-subjectivity. Furthermore, the Church pertains to the mystery of Christ; Christ is carrying out in the Church his plan of redemption. He is dynamically at work in the Church through his spirit... The Church is a mystery. It is a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God. It lies, therefore, within the very nature of the Church to be always open to new and greater exploration.”⁹³

The depth and breadth of what it means to be the church is so expansive that humanity cannot fully comprehend it. We define the Church in the manner in which we have experienced it or what we believe it to be, but the Church is much more. Just as we are limited in defining God so are we in defining the church. God transcends time, space, and place. God has no beginning or end. All that we know of God is what the Creator has revealed to humanity through revelation, but our revelation does not even come close to the essence of who God truly is. There is no one definition that encompasses all that the God is. The name of God revealed to Moses is YHWH or I AM That I AM. Trying to define God any other way would inevitably fall short. In a similar manner since the church is a work of God brought forth before the beginning of time, neither can we fully comprehend it; to this Dulles suggests, “Some would conclude that ecclesiology must be apophatic; that we can have only a *theologia negativa* of the Church, affirming not what it

⁹³Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2002), 10.

is but only what it is not.”⁹⁴ By affirming only what the church is not, we leave open the possibility to explore what the Church is and what God has created the church to be. Paul Minear in his book, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* provides us with ninety-six different images of the church, which speaks of God’s relationship to the church. These images of the church are an effort to explain the church in terms that humanity. However, that which is divine cannot truly be understood or explained by that that is not. The Apostle Paul writes, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.”⁹⁵ As long as we are confined to the earthly, we will never know the true church of Christ. We must wait until judgment day, when God shall unite all the saints in the true church of God to fully understand what it means to be the church.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵1 Cor 13:12.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

The cultural shift of society has lead to a shift in beliefs, values, behaviors, attitudes, and expectations from previous generations. David Kinnaman suggests because our culture is discontinuously different, the generation that we are encountering is different from any other generation. Many in this generation cannot relate to older generation's experiences because they are too far removed from them.¹ Absolutes which former generations ascribed to are not necessarily so with the current generation because this generation's frame of reference is different. The younger generation today is more distracted and savvy due to technological and other advancements not previously seen by other generations.

Henri Nouwen divides the generations into two categories; modern and pre-modern. He asserts the difference is not in age but in consciousness and related lifestyles. While both groups exist in the same space, those who are pre-modern people have a previous frame of reference of an earlier period that grounds their outlook on life that modern people do not have. In defining modern people, Henri Nouwen sites Robert J. Lifton in that, "modern people are characterized by a (1) historical dislocation, (2) a

¹David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church—and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2011), 38.

fragmented ideology, (3) and a search for a new morality.”² The church finds itself competing to be a relevant influence on a generation that is not impressed with the traditional form of ministry. Because culture has shifted, the church’s paradigm for ministry must also shift. The church must be willing to explore new avenues for transferring its faith in order to meet the needs of young adults. The church is challenged to engage young adults in ministry in light of their current context. At the same time, the church cannot afford to present a watered down version of the Gospel. The church must continue to herald the necessity for the centrality of the sovereignty of God in the life of the believer, culture, and that context.³

When the Church places an emphasis on young adults, it’s preaching, and teaching on foundational biblical truths, young adults will respond positively and become more involved in the Church. As a result of the specially designed worship experience, the next generation will begin to grow in their spiritual faith, therefore, increasing their engagement within the church.

This project employed a qualitative research design. According to John Creswell, a qualitative research design “is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process involves emerging questions and procedures; data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher

²Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (Garden City, NJ: Double Day, 1979), 11, 12.

³William H. Curtis (lecture, Peer Group, Ellis–Jones Convocation, Virginia Union University Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology, Richmond, November 14, 2012).

making interpretations of the data.”⁴ Qualitative research designs are specifically geared to study individual contexts as opposed to a large sampling of a population.

Within qualitative research design, the research used a phenomenological study.

“Phenomenological research is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experience about a phenomenon as described by participants.

Understanding the lived experiences marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning.”⁵

This approach was the best option for this research because the project presupposed using individuals who would be considered a part of the next generation in order to complete the study. Through the qualitative research design coupled with the phenomenological study, a better understanding of what motivates the next generation as it relates to their engagement within church emerged.

Measurement

The project used triangulation in order to collect data for the project.

“Triangulation is defined as the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints cast light upon a topic.”⁶ Using a triangulated approach helped to validate the project data and research.

⁴John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches* 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 4.

⁵Ibid., 13.

⁶Wendy Olsen, "Triangulation in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods Can Really Be Mixed," *Triangulation in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods Can Really Be Mixed*, accessed December 10, 2013, <http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/staff/Triangulation.pdf>.

A contemporary worship experience was designed geared towards the next generation. The worship experience included food, fellowship, praise and worship, and a sermon/lesson. A pretest was first given to the participants to determine their initial views, understanding, and involvement in church. Following the pretest, the contemporary worship experience was implemented over a four-week period. After the contemporary worship sessions were completed, a posttest was administered to ascertain the changes the contemporary worship experience had on the participants. The pre and post test were tabulated, followed by a focus group composed of individuals who took part in the worship experience. The focus group gave further insight to the answers of the survey. The final method of testing was in depth interviews of seven individuals and records their response.

There were a significant number of next generation members that attended the traditional worship services, however that was the extent of their involvement and engagement. For a majority of the next generation, they would arrive just before the sermon and leave as soon as the sermon was completed. There was no sense of community or connectedness within the larger congregation. The young adult Bible study geared towards the next generation was not effective. On the average the Bible study would see about twelve individuals. These twelve individuals represented the core of what was considered the young adult ministry. Those who were a part of the next generation often commented how they felt the church was lacking a place for them. One individual who grew up in the church commented that she usually attend church on the second Sundays because the church has children's church for her children, however, the church had nothing for her. Inquire was made as to what would attract the next

generation. From this inquiry many answers were given. Among the top answers were music and food.

This concern about the engagement of the young adults within the church was shared with the staff ministers and directors during the churches Total Quality Meeting (TQM). TQM is a quarterly meeting where the staff ministers and directors of the church measure the effectiveness of each ministry and plan for the upcoming quarter. The research suggested the church was not a next generation friendly church. Everything within the church was geared towards those who could be considered baby boomers and beyond. Many of the ministers and directors agreed with the observation. The researcher then proposed to create a contemporary worship service specifically geared towards the next generation, with some hesitation, the ministers and directors gave their blessing to proceed with developing a contemporary worship service.

A team made up of next generation members was assembled to help design the contemporary worship. This team would also act as the context associates for the project. Individuals who would make up the team were chosen methodically. The first individual asked to be a part of the project was the director of the contemporary choir, which at one time was a young adult choir, but now the majority of its members were far past the age of being considered a young adult. A gifted singer was added to be the praise and worship leader. Together, they were responsible for creating a praise team and securing musicians for the contemporary worship. An individual to oversee the audio-visual aspect of the contemporary worship was added; he would also take the lead in creating advertisement. Next, an individual was added to handle the logistical aspect of the contemporary worship including filling out the necessary paper work, requesting various

services needed, and making sure everything was in order. The last individual added to the team was a member of the original core group of the young adult ministry.

The group began to meet to discuss how to make the contemporary worship a reality. They came to consensus that the format should be kept simple to include a fellowship period at the beginning followed by praise and worship, and a sermon. After the team developed their contemporary worship, the next two months were spent recruiting people for the praise and worship team and the audio-visual ministry. A month before the initial contemporary worship, the team began to announce the new worship in church, and published it in the monthly bulletin, created small advertisement cards, and post videos and tweets for the worship on Facebook, Twitter, and Google Hangout. Each member of the team made a concerted effort to personally invite young adults throughout the church.

Pre and Post Test

At the initial worship after the fellowship portion, one of the context associates administered the pretest to the participants with an incentive of winning one of two gift cards. The goal of the pretest was to get an understanding of the participants' view of church and the role within the church. It was decided the best way to approach the pre and post-test was to use the Likert Scale. Using the Likert Scale allowed responses to be rated via a spectrum ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Likert Scale also offered a way to consistently measure data. The questions within the pre and post-test focused on the participants' attitude and attendance at church. At the end of the four contemporary worship services a post-test was given to compared and contrast the answers given in the pre-test.

Focus Group

The focus group questions were attained during the contemporary worship services. These questions were acquired through icebreakers as well as incorporated within the actual sermon/lesson. The sermons and lectures were taped and later transcribed to ascertain the desired information. The sermons/lessons which the questions were taken were “What is the Church” taken from Act 2:42-47, and “Scandal: The Grace Case” taken from Ephesians 2:1-10. In the sermon “What is the Church” we looked at the characteristics of the first church and how it compared to the perception of the next generation idea of church. “Scandal: The Case for Grace,” emphasized John Wesley’s understanding of the church through Grace. The lesson focused on our understanding of grace and how the Christian community should be conduits of grace.

In-depth Interviews

After the fourth contemporary worship service individual in depth interviews were scheduled with ten participants. The participants were chosen randomly and had to have attended all four worship services in order to be eligible to take part in the in-depth interviews. The interviews were done in person and via recording. Each interview was recorded and later transcribed. The in-depth interviews chronicled the participants’ views and involvement in church leading up to the contemporary worship as well as how the contemporary worship engaged them and their attitude on the contemporary worship service.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

Building on Wesley's definition of the church, "all the persons in the universe who God hath so called out of the world as to entitle them to the preceding character, as to be one body, united by one Spirit; having one faith, one hope, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all;"¹ This project endeavored to design a contemporary model that would engage the next generation. At the forefront of the model, Wesley understands that the church receives her identity from the Holy Spirit; it is the Holy Spirit that works to bring people to Christ and unite them with other believers. The Holy Spirit also works to form the church as an institution and engage the people in the life and the work of the church and the institution. This community that is formed through the Holy Spirit and that is united by faith in Christ, is necessary for believers to come and grow in their belief as they pursue holiness.

For the purposes of the project, a segment of the young adult ministry of Brentwood Baptist Church in Houston, Texas were used as participants. The segment was specific to individuals ages, eighteen to thirty-nine. Many of the members who participated in the study had been a part of Brentwood since their youth. Others joined

¹John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College*, Oxford, vol. VI (London, England: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), 396, accessed September 30, 2013, doi:<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00076196/00006/1j>.

Brentwood as a young adult. The participants' level of activity within the church ran the gamut from Sunday attenders only to being very active in the church.

The Brentwood Young Adult ministry hosted Bible studies on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. To facilitate the contemporary worship service, the fourth Tuesday of each month was reserved because a small portion of the young adults were used to meeting on the fourth Tuesdays. The goal of the study was to measure the participants' attitude towards the church, increase attendance, and their relational connection.

The contemporary worship service was named, SWAGG. The Urban Dictionary defines SWAGG as, "Confidence, unique style, what makes you different from everybody, wearing clothes with confidence (not worrying about what people think about your style) having pride without being boastful (cocky)...To be cool or to know you are cool (not cocky though)."² The goal of the contemporary worship service was to create a space where individuals could feel comfortable in worshipping in their own style or form without fear of being judged. Our tag was, "Come as you are... No really. It's authentic worship for an authentic you."

The format and setup of the contemporary worship proved to be more attractive to the participants. In a traditional worship setting, the setup may be similar to: a sanctuary with multiple rows of long pews in two to four sections; large, elevated stage with instruments flanking either side; large podium (pulpit) engulfing the center of the stage, with chairs hiding behind the podium that are reserved for preachers; and choir stand behind the preachers' chairs.

²Urban Dictionary, SWAGG, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=swagg>.

It was imperative to revamp the structure of the worship using: half of a ballroom, four rows of chairs in two sections in a semi-circle; medium sized, slightly elevated stage (with only mics) with instruments on the floor to the right of the stage; screen and projector on the wall of the stage, and high tables lined across the room behind the chairs.

This setup was used to be closer to the participants, and to increase the intimacy between the participants and me by decreasing the distance between us. In order to achieve this, as I presented, I walked around on the floor between the stage and the participants' chairs. The sermon model evolved from that of a traditional model to more of a dialectical model. This allowed for more personal interaction, encouraging more conversation and dialogue, validating the participants' ideas and feelings, thus, fostering their need for community. To illustrate sermon points, I often relied on video clips from pop culture so the idea could become more tangible. Prior to the Bible study presentation, a meal was provided, which encouraged dialogue among the participants. To further this dialogue, starting with the second contemporary worship a group, an icebreaker was presented which tied into the topic and also caused participants to think. Following the group exercise, volunteers were asked to elaborate on the group discussion.

When working with young adults, it was determined that they rely heavily on multimedia and social networking in their everyday lives; therefore, multimedia was incorporated in Bible study presentations. The use of video and slides aided in reaching visual learners more effectively, moreover, the use of social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) proved helpful in advertising for SWAGG. The participants sent invitations to others, who responded favorably. When asked, "Why did you attend SWAGG," an overwhelming number responded because they were personally invited. Although notices

of the event were publicized in the weekly bulletins (paper and electronic), announced in church on multiple Sundays, plastered throughout the church and posted on the church website, the participants responses were attributable to personal invitations.

To get participants more engaged in worship, a praise and worship group was formed that consisted of a lead singer, six to seven back-up singers and a four piece band (keyboard, organ, drums, and bass guitar). The stage was appropriately sized to hold the six to seven singers and their mics. The music was very easy to learn, even if the participants had never heard the songs before. The verses were short and repetitive, still being very theologically appropriate. While the lead singer encouraged and invited the participants to sing along and join in the praise and worshipful atmosphere, the words of the songs were displayed on the screen with bright, moving backgrounds.

In order to ascertain data, pre and post-test questionnaires were used; worship, focus group, and in-depth exit interviews were used. The in-depth interviews were conducted over a period of two weeks. Some interviews were completed over the phone, while others were held face-to-face. Observation of context associates was used in order to gain additional feedback. The study focused on three themes: attitude, attendance, and relational bond.

In measuring the attitude of young adults, those who are involved in church, and believe the church is relevant was assessed. The pre and post-test revealed that young adults responded more favorably to the traditional worship. By and large their understanding of the church has been shaped through the traditional church and they have developed an appreciation for the tradition. For many, the traditional worship at Brentwood is what they know, what they have grown up in, and what they expect

worship to be. As expected, when something new is introduced, there is a reluctance to embrace it. Introducing contemporary worship was foreign to the participants and it makes them rethink their idea of worship and the church.

When asked about her church experience and exposure to church, interviewee B states the reason she joined the church was because “It fed my soul so that’s why I decided to join, not because he (my husband) was a member, but because I enjoyed it and I felt like my needs were met here at Brentwood.” Interview B reiterates the impact traditional style of worship has had on her. However, it does not negate her experience within the contemporary worship experience. When asked to compare and contrast the two styles of worship, she responds:

I like the stories. I like what the topics have been lately as far as ... It’s not so much a bible verse, but it’s a paragraph in the bible that you could relate to at a different point in their story or the struggle that they were going through. It’s easy to relate to the way it had been broken down and also how again with the different life variations of people’s life stories, how they relate to it, you hear it and it’s like man, I thought I was the only one going through something like that, I’m not alone and that’s what I think one of the big things is that you’re not alone. For people in our age group, it’s easier you hit or miss and it’s hard to see that people that aren’t in the bible or in church or things like that, they’re just missing out and you’re not alone. You just really feel that you’re not alone and you could see other people are going through things that you may go through and you can express yourself and get a little bit of help or clarification or satisfaction from it instead of just handling it by the ways of the world I should say. It’s different and I think for me it is more intimate worship. The SWAGG is just ... It’s not the whole service of church.

Describing the contemporary style of worship as different does not necessarily mean deficient. From the remaining content of her response, it is undeniable that the contemporary worship style has made an impact. Many of the next generation are looking for something different. It is the “different” which is attractive to them.

Within the focus group, the same sentiments can be gathered, there were a few respondents who mentioned they preferred the old style of Bible study and they liked it being held in the sanctuary, as opposed to in the ballroom. Some responded that was just what they were used to; however, the contemporary worship overall was phenomenal and they liked the different parts of the worship, everything from the music, to graphics, to the interaction. One participant commented, "I was a little hesitant about SWAGG at first; however, I enjoyed myself, so I'm a fan."

Different can be intimidating, but it can also be refreshing. In this case, different exposed the participants to something new that does not necessarily remove their love and appreciation for the traditional worship experience, but it opens them up to new possibilities of what worship is. In the final analysis, the researcher does not think it is an either or choice; rather, there must be a blending of both; the traditional and contemporary worship with the aim of reaching those within the church and those who are on the outer periphery.

When trying to gage the relevancy of an object, it is important to make sure the object is accomplishing its desired goals. One of the goals of the church is to make sure the congregants are engaged in worship and not just a consumer of worship.

Question two was designed to measure the possible engagement of young adults. The results suggested more participants felt they could find a place to serve within SWAGG as opposed to the traditional church. While question one shows the traditional church is preferred, question two suggests the contemporary church allows for more engagement of the individuals. Many young adults feel they do not have a voice in the church; however, SWAGG gave them an opportunity to design and build worship unique

to them. Interviewee K suggests the reason he became involved in SWAGG was because he was asked to work. In a similar manner, the reason interviewee J became involved with SWAGG was because he was asked to be a part of the praise team. The observations from the focus group felt SWAGG gave them an opportunity “to contribute to the service.” Interviewee H best sums the consensus:

The idea behind swag. That it's targeted specifically for our age group. The way that it's presented, you know that it's going to be a little bit different than sitting around a table with a bunch of bibles and just going back and forth. It's got that pop and that energy just in the presentation. That does actually translate into the actual worship. You are expect to be active and to participate. You're not going to come to swag and just sit around and not talk to anybody and not talk. I haven't seen that and I think that's great.

The next generation wants to be involved and engaged. The church must make space for them to use their gifts and talents and to make them feel they can make valuable contributions to the body of Christ. Many times, this generation is labeled as being consumer Christians, but the results showed that this generation reflects just the opposite. They want to be involved and they want to have a voice. When their voice is silenced and their need to be involved ignored, the next generation is repelled by the church repels.

Another aspect of gaging whether something is relevant is whether it specifically targets a certain group. Question three of the pre and post-test asked the participants if they believed a concerted effort was made to reach out to their age group. Again the results strongly favored the contemporary worship SWAGG as opposed to the Brentwood's traditional worship style. When asked what makes SWAGG different from the traditional worship, Interviewee L states, “Because it (SWAGG) speaks to us. It's for the young adults. It's not old school. It's what we're going through and dealing with now.

It's a now thing. It's what young adults need now." Interviewee J echoed the same sentiments:

I think swag again has a focus. The focus is on young adults conversationally seems more geared towards definitely in conversation and topic wise is geared towards the young adult life and more things the young adults probably would deal with than the older, more mature seasoned adults with the aging of the church. The church now, at this point, is probably older definitely, than when I was in the youth ministry. I think swag provides that opportunity for young adults of the church to actually kind of be able to come in and participate. I don't necessarily know that all young adults are comfortable in participating outside of other young adults. I think you are out to get young adults involved in bible study and just in participating generally when they are around their own as opposed to older in some instances. I think that's kind of, what makes the difference."

The Next Generation wants to feel that they are valued. This is done by intentionally reaching out to them. Issues the next generations are facing are different from the issues older generations face. Space needs to be provided so that the next generation can have their issues addressed. Interviewee C suggests sometimes the next generation can get lost within the transition from youth to being an adult.

We grow up from being children to teenagers and then it's like you just jump into the main adulthood but we're still young adults. We still ... I'm not going to say in essence trying to find ourselves, but yeah we kind of are so we need something that caters to that where we can just be ourselves and be relaxed and it's not so structured like some of the older ministries and it's not super laid back like some of the youth events, so where we can fit in.

Ages eighteen to thirty-nine are critical. Most young adults are still trying to find themselves. Now, more than ever before, they are in need of something specifically designed to help them navigate through this phase of life. Parents are no longer the figure that sets their boundaries. They are trying to figure out for themselves what does and does not work. The next generation is seeking direction. The responsibility of the church is to create a space where the next generation can receive guidance and direction.

Question four was designed to measure the next generation's attendance habits. Interestingly, a larger percentage of participants indicated they attend church on a regular basis; however, when asked if they are willing to attend SWAGG on a regular basis, the percentage of those who ranged from agree to strongly agree was greater than that of those who suggested they attend church on a regular basis. The results suggest participants are more likely to attend a contemporary worship service. Within in the focus group, some indicated the reason for lack of attendance is competing priorities. These priorities ranged from family, school, and work. At the same time, those who attended SWAGG revealed it was convenient; it provided meals and allowed them to bring their children.

The church must address the variables, which may keep the next generation from attending. Typically, once the next generation leaves work, their concern is what they will eat for dinner. By providing a meal, the church is increasing the likelihood that the next generation will attend because it is meeting one of their needs. In a number of interviews, the participants suggested the reason they come is because SWAGG not only feeds them spiritually, but physically as well. Food is a great drawing factor. While to some, it may seem inconsequential or just an additional expense, to the next generation, it is one less thing they have to worry about with an already hectic schedule.

Childcare is another variable. The church must consider making provisions for those who have children. It is impossible to plan for the next generation without contemplating the need to provide childcare. Though a separate space was not created for children, SWAGG welcomed parents to bring their children.

In addition to being convenient, another verb, which was used to describe the contemporary worship, was comfortable. Interviewee B states, “You’ve made SWAGG comfortable. The people that come, you make it comfortable for them to want to come back... once they come, they’ll want to come back.” In a similar manner, Participant K suggests SWAGG has encouraged his attendance, even though he admits over the years he has not been involved in church as much as he should. “It’s (church) something that you wanna keep close. It’s just you don’t want it to feel like a burden or an obligation; you want it to feel like something that naturally comes along. I was glad, SWAGG helped that out a lot.” The next generation attends church because they are seeking an authentic worship experience that is not based on a sense duty or because it is expected of them, but it genuinely meets their needs and speaks to their issues.

SWAGG not only provided the next generation an incentive to come, but it gives them an opportunity to invite others: Interviewee B: “I brag about it (SWAGG) all the time to co-workers, my cousins, some of my family members and I try to even send them the emails to let them know about it; but, because of the location, it’s harder for them to come across this part of town, but I tell them it’s a great place to come to get your needs met with the word as well as eat and fellowship. The fact that you guys provide food is awesome.” When individuals are excited about what’s going on, they take it upon themselves to tell others. They bring others because they are excited. For Brentwood, SWAGG has become a form of evangelism because the next generation is constantly inviting their friends; both church and unchurched. The original goal of this project was to reach out to those who were in church but not engaged; as a result of our efforts,

the young adults—who at one point were not engaged themselves— are reaching out to engage others.

I've already talked to a friend about it and I said the next time it comes up I think it's going to be an experience that she likes, especially when people come from different denominations. Not that Southern Baptist is better or any different from any other denomination, but the friend I was talking to, she's Church of Christ. They're worship experience is entirely different. I think Church of Christ, Church of God of Christ, they don't use instruments or things like that. She's not opposed to seeing just how ... Sometimes the things that other people consider worldly are different ways that we show praise and it has nothing to do with whether you're right or wrong, but sometimes it can bring you closer. She's really open just to seeing what the experience is like. I think it might help her at least be more involved with church because she goes to church but she's really working on being more spiritually connected, if that makes sense.

The next generation wants to be connected and spiritually engaged. Once they have found a way to do so, they are excited to share with others how they can be engaged in worship. For the most part, SWAGG solely focused on those who were a part of the church. In reaching out to the next generation who were already in the church, the next generation reached out to their peers who they believed could benefit from what SWAGG had to offer.

The last of the three themes, which emerged from the survey, was that of relational bonds or sense of community. Within the survey, 44% of participants strongly agreed they have developed meaningful relationships in church. While 34% agreed through church, they developed meaningful relationships, 16% were neutral, and 6% disagreed. The post-test suggested 47% of participants strongly agreed that meaningful relationships were formed; while 44% agreed. Both of these numbers were an increase from the initial pretest. The numbers of those who were neutral dropped to 9% and no one disagreed. The numbers show that due to the contemporary worship, relationships

were being forged and strengthened. The development of relationships is essential to building the community because it is through relationships that community is formed.

SWAGG provided an avenue for the next generation to strengthen their relationships. Interviewee L states, "I've seen these people around church for years to come. But now being actually in contact with them, it's like, "Oh my God." I look forward to connecting with them, in church, and outside of church because I feel like we all have connected for a reason and we all kind of have the same motivation of what we want out of SWAG." This generation yearns to be a part of something that is bigger than them and connected to others in a similar stage or phase of life. It is their commonality that brings them together.

The focus group agreed that part of the importance of going to church is the relationship with other Christians and people who are like-minded because they are able to prop you up and rekindle your spirit. Community is formed through commonality or shared experiences. It is this same commonality, which motivates them to invite others. Interviewee C suggests the reason she brought her guest to the contemporary worship is because:

She needs to be around people who she can see that are young adults like her. They could be single parents that had a baby out of wedlock, but they're still going to church. They're not being judged like that. It's a community where she can feel comfortable and where she can talk about it. She needs that type of encouragement in her life being young and a single mom.

The next generation looks for those who will encourage and affirm them. They, like those who have come before them, have made their share of mistakes and have had to deal with their own struggles, but know there is hope; there are others like them who have had to navigate the same waters. They want to be assured that God still loves them.

Too often this generation is victim of overly critical Christians, which turn them away from the church. Similar to most people, they are looking for a place where they can figure out life together, navigating through life's difficulties without fear of being ridiculed. When asked if he had any other thoughts about SWAGG, participant A suggested SWAGG should stand for Seeking Wisdom and God's Grace. He suggests we gain wisdom through shared life experiences of others, as we study the Bible in community, "being in the Bible with friends, laughing about it, people that help uplift you and lift you up at the same time, that's what I was thinking, like seeking wisdom in God's Grace. It's not only on Sunday. You're supposed to use each other to help find your way too. Like I said, our age group, I think that's lost nowadays, a lot of times." Community is essential. In an individualized world, the next generation is looking to create bonds that go beyond being casual acquaintances on Sunday and carry throughout their everyday life. They are looking for covenant partners who can hold them accountable.

Q1. PRE: The church is relevant

66 percent strongly agree; 28 percent agree; 3 percent neutral; 3 percent strongly disagree

POST: SWAGG is relevant.

41 percent strongly agree; 50 percent agree; 9 percent were neutral

Q2. PRE: The church offers a place where I can serve and make a contribution.

34 percent of the participants strongly agreed; 44 percent agreed; 16 percent were neutral; 3 percent disagreed; 3 percent strongly disagreed.

POST: SWAGG offers a place where I can serve and make a contribution.

35 percent of participants strongly agreed; 56 percent agreed; 6 percent were neutral; 3 disagreed

Q3. PRE: The church makes a concerted effort to reach out to my age group

22 percent of participants strongly agreed; 44 percent agreed; 25 percent were neutral; 6 percent disagreed; 3 percent strongly disagreed.

POST: SWAGG makes a concerted effort to reach out to my age group
50 percent of participants strongly agreed; 34 percent agreed; and 16 percent were neutral.

Q4. PRE: I make an effort to go to church on a regular basis
53 percent of participants strongly agreed; 34 percent agreed; 3 percent were neutral; 10 percent disagreed.

POST: I would be willing to attend SWAGG on a regular basis
41 percent of participants strongly agreed; 50 percent agreed; 9 percent were neutral.

Q5. PRE: I have developed meaningful relationships in church.
44 percent of participants strongly agreed; 34 percent agreed; 16 percent were neutral; 6 percent disagreed.

POST: SWAGG offers an opportunity for me to develop meaningful relationships
47 percent of participants strongly agreed; 44 percent agreed; 9 percent were neutral.

Focus Group Questions

Do you attend Church every Sunday? Why or why not?

- We don't attend church every Sunday because we work and go to school so we don't every Sunday. We try though.

Did you grow up in church? How has this shaped the person you are today and your perception of church? What denomination of faith were you raised in, if at all?

- The majority of the focus group grew up in church. For some, the present context was the only church they had been exposed to.
- I was telling them that I grew up in the church, but I grew up in different churches, because we were moving a lot, but we were always in church every time we moved. Then my dad and his wife, they were Lutheran and so, I was exposed to the Lutheran experience. To me, it was super duper boring and I was like, okay I'm not really feeling this. Then the churches that my mom went to, they were always so long and I didn't understand the shouting around the church and speaking in tongues and stuff like that. For me, just growing up and just going to various types of churches, I was telling that when I came here, that's when I felt like okay, I get church; not necessarily church, but I get the relationship with Christ, because before when the preacher is preaching, if you don't really understand what he's saying, it's hard, especially if you haven't experienced it and you weren't really taught, so when I came here, that's when it started making sense to me.

What are some stereotypes of people who are Baptist, Catholic, Pentecostal, Mega Churches, etc.? Have these stereotypes affected your perception of the church?

- One of the ones that we came up with was that church people are uppity. Why is that one of the stereotypes? When we had a conversation, it was pretty much more around that church people think they better than everybody and think holier than thou concept and the church be right and everybody else was wrong.
- I want to answer that question too, because speaking personally, I didn't grow up in the church, so one thing I see sometimes about church people is sometimes they automatically assume that everybody that's at church is saved and they assume that everybody knows the hymns and things like that. They get upset when you don't, so that's happened to me. I didn't know some hymns and certain hymns and they like, "You should know!" Everybody doesn't know, like myself.

I'm just starting to learn after I've been in church awhile. I'm just starting to pick up on some of those.

Do you think you it's important to attend church or can you be spiritually fed through your personal relationship with Christ by viewing Church at home via television or Internet?

- Our group, we said that it can go both ways, because people have their own opinion on churches and the preacher, so some people would like to sit at home and watch it; nowadays church is on TV. When I'm not at work, I come, but when I'm at work, I watch church on TV.
- Like she was saying, I think in our group, we have both sides of the coin. Another point that was made is the importance that coming to church is really the relationship with the other Christians and people who are like mind of you, because I know me, all my friends are saved. It's always good to be around those who are of the like mind of you and who can prop you up or rekindle your spirit, things of that nature.

Give us your final thoughts about SWAGG.

- I started attending Young Adult Bible Study at Brentwood when there were just a few of us meeting in the Fellowship Hall every second and fourth Tuesday. That was a nice, intimate environment, but I always wondered, where are the other young adults that I see in church? SWAGG answered that question for me. I am pleasantly surprised each time I walked into the ballroom and saw a group of 30 plus young adults in attendance compared to the smaller group we used to have. SWAGG has allowed me to meet and interact with other like-minded young people that I might not have ever seen or spoken to at a church as large as Brentwood.

SWAGG has also afforded me the opportunity to expose a good friend (who is currently not attending church because he doesn't feel as though traditional services reach him) to something new and really targeted to our age group. My friend still won't come to church on Sunday morning but has made it to SWAGG a couple of times and he's really enjoyed himself and been blessed. The worship is interactive and dynamic. Watching video clips and participating in role-play is not something I'm used to doing in a bible study or worship service. Normally you are talked to, but in SWAGG we are all active participants, which allows me to connect to the message on a deeper more personal level. The praise and worship music is more contemporary, yet still somehow reminiscent of the hymns and spirituals I listened to in church as a young child and still love.

- I'm not a fan of the name, which is solely due to my dislike of the word "SWAGG."

The service was phenomenal. I really enjoyed the skits. I think it opened people up and allowed them to feel welcome to speak and contribute to the service. I like the PowerPoint presentation but I would have appreciated a handout. I think the room is too big. Of course I loved the music. The Praise Team is awesome!! I've always said Brentwood needed a Praise Team. They have so much energy and you can tell that they are singing for the Lord. They are awesome! Some people say that they preferred our regular Bible study over SWAGG. The reason for this was that Bible Study is more intimate than SWAGG. I was a little hesitant about SWAGG at first, however, I enjoyed myself so I'm a fan.

Exit Interview Questions

- Tell me about your church experience.
- What compelled you to get involved in SWAGG?
- How has your attendance of these worship events encouraged or discouraged you in your commitment or participation in church?
- Do you see yourself as a catalyst to encourage other young adults to attend this worship or any other worship? Why or why not?
- What makes SWAGG different from our traditional worship
- What has encouraged you to continue to come?
- If any what spiritual impact did attending these worship events have on you?
- Do you see relationships forming because of SWAGG?

- What elements of this worship fit your ideal of worship?
- What can be added that you would like to see or that would interest other young adults?
- What are the key elements that would attract other young adults?

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMERY, AND CONCLUSION

At the onset of this project, the diminishing presence of the next generation in church was investigated. In order to do so, a definition of church was sought. Wesley's definition of the church as "a congregation, or body of people united together in the service of God,"¹ was used." The project was entitled, "Engaging the Next Generation in Church in a Postmodern Culture." The hypothesis driving the research was, when the Church places an emphasis on the next generation through preaching, and teaching of foundational biblical truths, the next generation will respond positively and become more involved in the Church. To measure the effectiveness of the study, the research attempted to measure attitude, attendance, and the importance of relational bonds/community.

In order to test the hypothesis, a phenomenological qualitative research design was employed. Data triangulation was used to determine the validity of the project and it allowed various research methods to be collected and analyzed.

The effectiveness of the project is best described through the following comments from participants:

- I started attending Young Adult Bible Study at Brentwood when there were just a few of us meeting in the Fellowship Hall every second and fourth Tuesday. That was a nice, intimate environment, but I always wondered,

¹John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College*, Oxford, vol. VI (London, England: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), 392, accessed September 30, 2013, doi:<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00076196/00006/1j>.

where are the other young adults that I see in church? SWAGG² answered that question for me. I am pleasantly surprised each time I walk into the ballroom and see a group of 30 plus young adults in attendance compared to the smaller group we used to have. SWAGG has allowed me to meet and interact with other like-minded young people that I might not have ever seen or spoken to at a church as large as Brentwood.

- SWAGG has also afforded me the opportunity to expose a good friend (who is currently not attending church because he doesn't feel as though traditional services reach him) to something new and really targeted to our age group. My friend still won't come to church on Sunday morning, but has made it to SWAGG a couple of times and he's really enjoyed himself and been blessed. The worship is interactive and dynamic. Watching video clips and participating in role play is not something I'm used to doing in a bible study or worship service. Normally, you are talked to, but in SWAGG we are all active participants, which allows me to connect to the message on a deeper more personal level. The praise and worship music is more contemporary; yet, still somehow reminiscent of the hymns and spirituals I listened to in church as a young child and still love.
- SWAGG has encouraged me to be more active in church because honestly, even though it's a larger church, at SWAGG, there were a lot of people I hadn't seen since I was in high school over ten years ago. There were a lot of young adults that I hadn't met before that shared how they were active in the church and how they were able to find time even with busy schedules to do things. It's kind of like one of those things where you're seeing other people who have really challenging schedules and they're able make time. It's one of those things where you see people who have a love for Christ that is in your certain age group that you kind of want to build relationships with people who share the same spiritual goals with you. I think it helps promote that.
- SWAGG has encouraged my participation in church because I didn't really know there was that many other people in the church that knew how I felt or even had the same thoughts as me or how I was feeling about some of the grievances that I had with the church. At the same time, it [the Church] is a part of your life. It's something that you want to keep close. It's just you don't want it to feel like a burden or an obligation, you want it to feel like something that naturally comes along. I was glad; SWAGG helped that out a lot.
- I feel like SWAGG is for me. It's a ministry to where it reaches out to young adults. People feel that young adults don't have problems or issues or that their

²SWAGG is mostly known as style, unique part of what makes you different than the other players in a cool way. The way you carry yourself (confidence), your gear(clothes), and anything else that is pimpin, accessed December 24, 2014, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=swagg>.

life is good. I feel like we all go through the same thing, especially if you an adult, you're a working adult, you have bills, you have finances, you just have life in general. SWAGG has helped me, especially with the messages, with attending church, with love, with family. I feel like it has drawn me closer to my Father and trying to get to know my siblings on my Father's side as well.

The statements above would suggest the project was a success in that it promoted attendance, participation, and fostered a sense of community. The study also suggests that despite national statistics, the next generation wants to be connected, involved, and engaged in the church. Their idea of church and the form, which the church takes, may look different from what former generations are accustomed; however, the emphasis should not necessarily be put on the form, but rather the substance of sound theological preaching and teaching.

Not only must the must be considered, but the model of what we deem traditional preaching. When the project began, many ideas were considered in how to contemporize the worship by making it more interactive. Icebreakers were used that coincided with sermons, meals as an act of worship, video clips from pop culture movies for sermon illustrations, diminished distance between participants and speaker by moving among them, rather than using an elevated stage. However, the sermons initially were engrained in a traditional style—where the preacher talks/preaches to the congregation. A few questions were asked during the sermons to obtain feedback from others; nevertheless, the sermons followed the traditional idea of what a sermon should look like.

One context associate challenged me to stop talking to the participants and talk with the participants. He further recommended not telling them what they should feel and believe and to allow participants to wrestle with the same theological questions he wrestles with in designing the sermon. Other context associates challenged the researcher

to become a facilitator as he and the next generation explored scriptures together. It was also recommended to allow room for members to express their doubt, frustration, and even raise questions without fear of condemnation or retribution. This method empowered them to be theologians in their own right as they were able to grapple with the theological implications of their thoughts and were led by scripture to the final conclusion they could claim as their own.

Initially, the ability of the next generation's capability and willingness to critically examine scripture was taken for granted. It was discovered that the participants could and desired to analyze the scripture. This led to pondering whether the traditional style of a sermon, being similar to a speech or lecture, perpetuates a current culture of Christians who are lax in understanding and application of the Bible because they rely solely on the minister to do all of the work.

The next generation's passion to confront graver issues was also underestimated. It was assumed that the topic of sex and getting over one's past would be well received; however, there were doubts about teaching on the church and grace. To my surprise, the next generation responded more favorably to the teaching on the church and grace, which suggests that the next generation cares about the church. They think about what the church is supposed to be, how the church has failed, and how they could play a role in the church if given the opportunity.

The next generation is looking for a church that is not intimidated by their questions or critical thinking. One that is willing to dialogue about personal issues. They do not want to be told what to believe; preferably, they desire a church that will listen and then in partnership, guide members to a correct understanding of scripture and

responsibility. They are looking for a church that no longer compartmentalizes religion, but recognizes the sacred and secular are inseparable. The secular informs the sacred and the sacred informs the secular.

It was much easier to craft a traditional sermon. The traditional sermon allowed me to control where the sermon would go and what questions to answer. When the sermons were designed to be more interactive, it forced me to view the scripture from different angles to not only answer questions, but to envision questions others may have. It forced me to study scripture more closely and to be more astute in my understanding so that I could accurately guide others to biblical truths. It made me more sensitive to how biblical truths are seen and depicted in our everyday lives. I learned how to transfer scenes from a movie, current events, personal stories and struggles to correlate with biblical truths that become more than abstract ideas and relevant concrete matters that can be easily applied.

It is imperative always to bring fresh new ideas to this generation and not be stagnant. The context associates impressed the importance of altering how worship is conducted in order to have the next generation anticipation what they could expect. They stressed the significance of not getting too attached to a certain format even if it seems to be working. One must be willing to take risks to find new ways to carry out worship. As a result, the setup of worship and the worship format was constantly changing; however, there are specific pillars of the worship unchanged, such as the praise and worship, sermons/lessons and the food and fellowship time at the beginning of worship.

The most valuable lesson learned is that the church must be willing to make space for the next generation to embrace their faith. Many times in the church, emphasis is put

on the children, youth, families and married couples, but not much importance to those who fall between the ages of eighteen to thirty-nine. If the church is going to reclaim this group, the church must be willing to make a concerted effort to reach them. While the message never changes, the church has to be willing to change its method of relaying the message to the next generation.

The model of worship that was most effective was a version of what Leonard Sweet termed, “E.P.I.C.” that is, worship should be experiential, participatory, image-driven, and communal.

This project seems to be a great starting point to address the issue of the diminishing presence of the next generation within the Church; however, only time will tell its true effectiveness. As the church seeks to minister to the next generation, the following should be kept in mind:

- Take time to listen for what the next generation is looking; it is a team effort. Initially, the researcher, who is a part of the next generation, but who is very steeped in the traditional style of worship, believed he had a good idea of what would attract others in his demographic. However, the true success of the project was a result of the researcher being open to ideas of his context associates who are also a part of the next generation.
- Let the next generation take leadership. A great way to get the next generation involved is to allow them to use the gifts and talents that God has given them. There were those whom we knew had a gift for singing, so we invited them to be a part of the praise team. Those who had degrees in communication and technology, we asked to work with the audio and visual aspect. We also sought out those who were gifted artists to create the graphics. Many came because they knew they played a key role in SWAGG’s development. Because of roles played by participants, young adult bible study attendance increased. When one is given leadership responsibilities, one will take ownership.
- Focus on those who are already in your church. This project was geared at getting the next generation involved who were present in the church, but not engaged in the life of the church. As their excitement grew, they began to invite friends. On an average, a half of those in attendance came with a friend

from the church. As a result, the contemporary worship became a great evangelism tool for the church.

- Be open to trying new things, even if it does not appeal to you. There were some leaders who initially did not understand why there was a need for a contemporary worship service for young adults. Some thought it was a waste of time and money. However, when they saw the impact it had at the church they understood the necessity.
- In an age of individualism and social media, the next generation is yearning for community. They are seeking a place where they can receive unconditional love and acceptance. The church has the capability of being that place. We have been called to be an agent of grace.

As with anything, looking back on the project reveals room for improvement. The advertising or communication of the contemporary worship would be done differently. For improvement, more time would be devoted to developing a team to oversee advertising. While a combination of social media and other avenues of advertising (i.e., churches webpage, twitter, Facebook, Google hangout, texts, pulpit announcements, fliers, and etc.), was used, the next generation was not tuned into the church's media avenues. While receiving information from these different outlets, none of them was the reason they came or decided to get involved. It is possible they are not familiar with the church's methods of advertising, even though it tries to utilize the venues they use. More people came as a result of personal invitations or because they were asked to work, and then, because of the general advertisement. The researcher would explore effective ways to communicate with the next generation.

This study does not suggest that in order for the church to reclaim the next generation that it completely changes its identity from traditional to contemporary. Many participants said they appreciated the traditionalism of their context. What the study does suggest is that the church be willing to create a space where the next generation can

actively live out their faith, have their voices heard and they, too, can take leadership in the church. Paul's exhortation to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4 is still very much relevant for the church today. If we preach and teach the word, the message, the gospel, the good news, and do not give in to itching ears and the trends of the day, then God will draw all, men and women, boys and girls, young and old to the organism that God has ordained as the *domina mater ecclesia*, the mother of Christians, the church.

APPENDIX A
BRENTWOOD DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH

BUDGET vs. ACTUAL

\$ x 1000

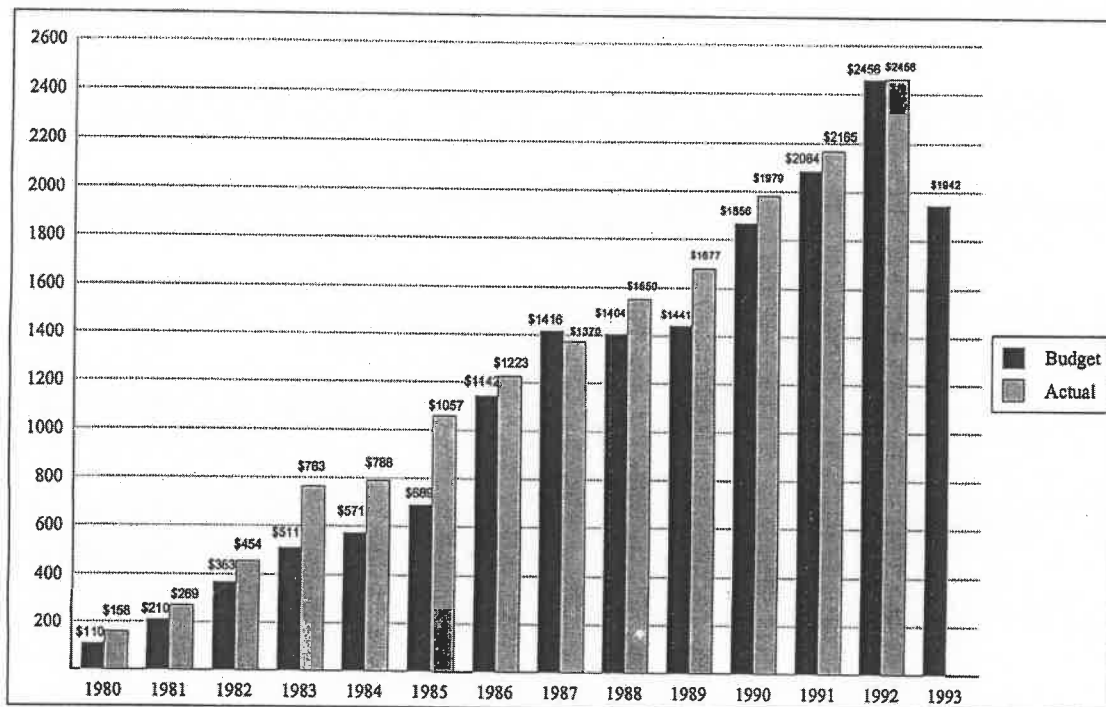


figure 2

MEMBERSHIP BY AGE GENDER
as of October 2012

<u>Age</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
0-17	233	256	489
18-25	476	500	976
26-35	422	725	1,147
36-45	383	718	1,101
46-55	420	684	1,104
56-65	389	695	1,084
66-75	163	267	430
76-85	34	93	127
86-100	3	30	33
Totals	2,523	3,968	6,491

Figure 3

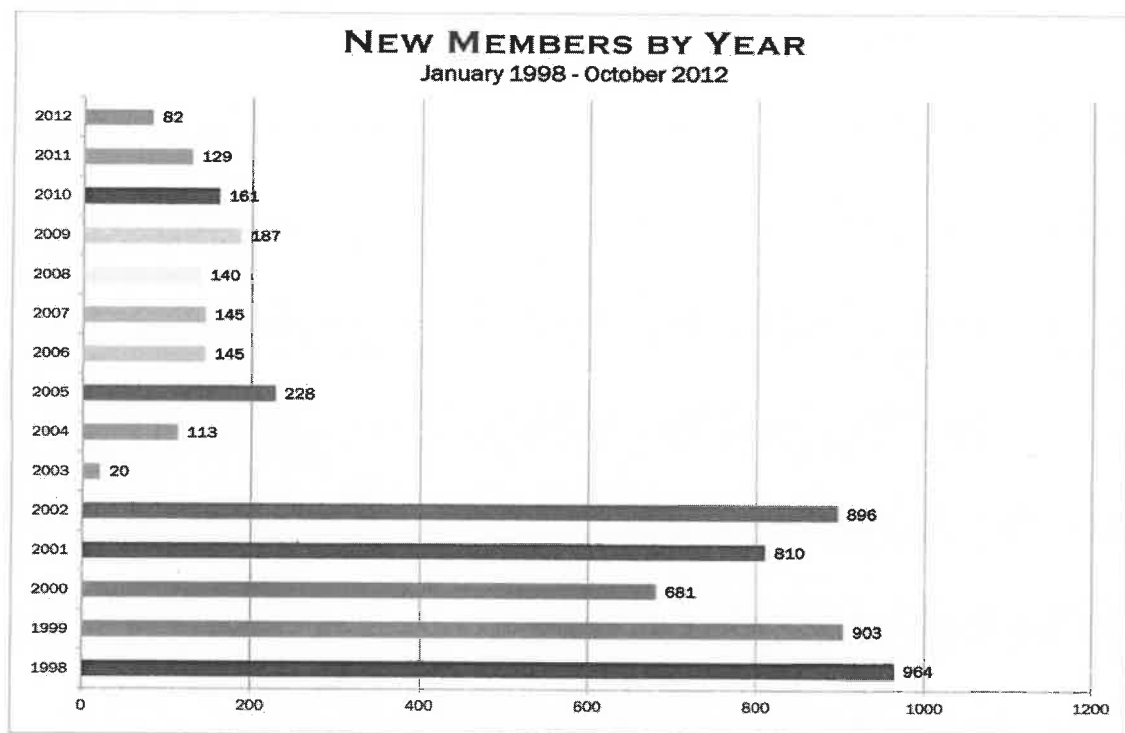


figure 4

Brentwood by the Numbers	
Founded	
In 1965	
Pastors	
Dr. Donald Carroll: 1965-1973	
Dr. Herbert Nash: 1976-1978	
Dr. Joe Samuel Ratliff: 1980-Present	
Land Acquisitions	
6 acres acquired in 1964	
9 acres acquired in 1984	
10 acres acquired in 1986	
25 acres acquired as a gift in 1995 (sold in 2006)	
37 acres acquired in 1998	
24 acres acquired in 2000	
111 Total Acres	
Buildings	
Sanctuary	Built in 1965 and renovated in 1998
Prayer Chapel	Built in 1984 and renovated in 1998
Worship Center	Built in 1986 and renovated in 2001
Credit Union/Brentwood Community Foundation	Built in 1988 and renovated in 2001
Brentwood Cottages	Built in 1997
Doris Gardner Ratliff Center for Child Development	Built in 2000
Joe Samuel Ratliff Lifelong Learning Center	Built in 2001
Maintenance Building built in 2003	Built in 2003
Modular Buildings	Built in 1988 and renovated in 2001
Administrative Wing	Built in 1965 and renovated in 2000
Ministries	
110 adult, youth and children organizations	
Community Services	
Brentwood Federal Credit Union founded in 1993	
Brentwood Community Foundation founded in 1993	
Brentwood Economic Community Development Corporation founded in 1993	
Church Planting/ Missions That Have Become Churches	
18 new churches since 1984	

Figure 5



APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

Engaging the Next Generation in Church in a Post-Modern Culture

You are invited to be in a research study of how to increase the presence of the Next Generation, ages 20-39, in church.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report the researcher might publish, he will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records, video & voice recordings included will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

Contact and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Reverend Joseph Ford. If you have questions, you are encouraged to contact him at jford@brentwoodbaptist.org.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

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Statement of Consent:

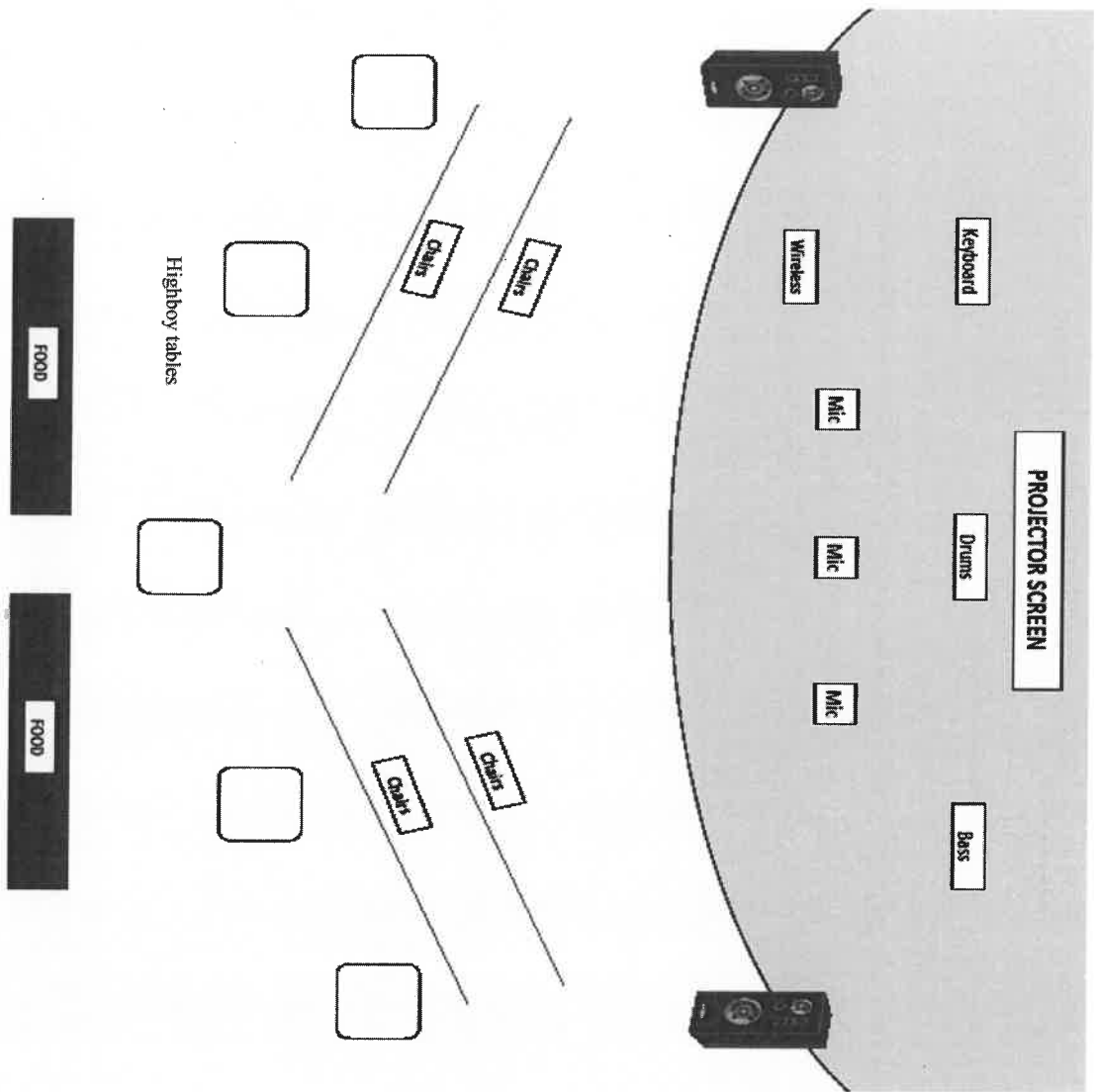
I have read the above information. I consent to participate in the study.

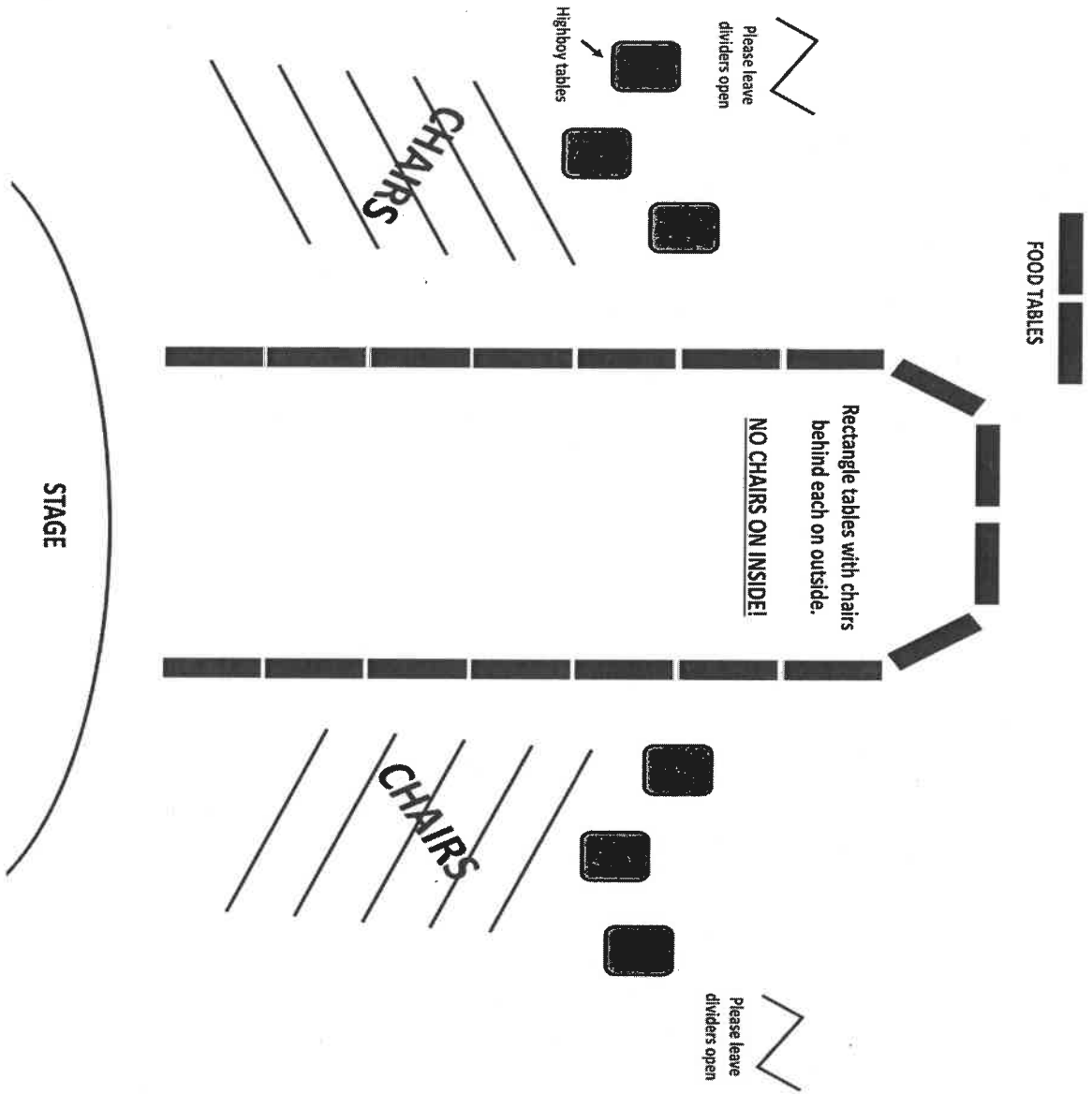
Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

APPENDIX C

DIAGRAMS





APPENDIX D
SWAGG SCRIPT

SWAGG Script

Tuesday, July 22, 2014

1.	SOUND CHECK / PRAISE	6:45
2.	WELOCME & PRAYER	7:00
3.	COMMON MEAL & FELLOWSHIP	7:05
4.	WORSHIP & PRAISE Young Adult Praise Team	7:30
5.	ICEBREAKER <i>GRACE ICEBREAKER</i> Jasmine Turner	7:45
6.	VIDEO CLIP Scandal Season 3 Episode 14, 20:09 - 25:01	7:55
7.	SERMON "SCANDAL: THE GRACE CASE" Rev. Joseph Ford	8:00
8.	INVITATION Rev. Joseph Ford	8:30
9.	GIVE AWAY Chic-Fila Gift Cards 1. One First Time Guest 2. Raffle Ticket Winner	8:35
10.	CLOSING PRAYER	8:38
	OFFERING COLLECTED AT DOORS AT END OF WORSHIP	8:40

APPENDIX E

GRACE ICEBREAKER

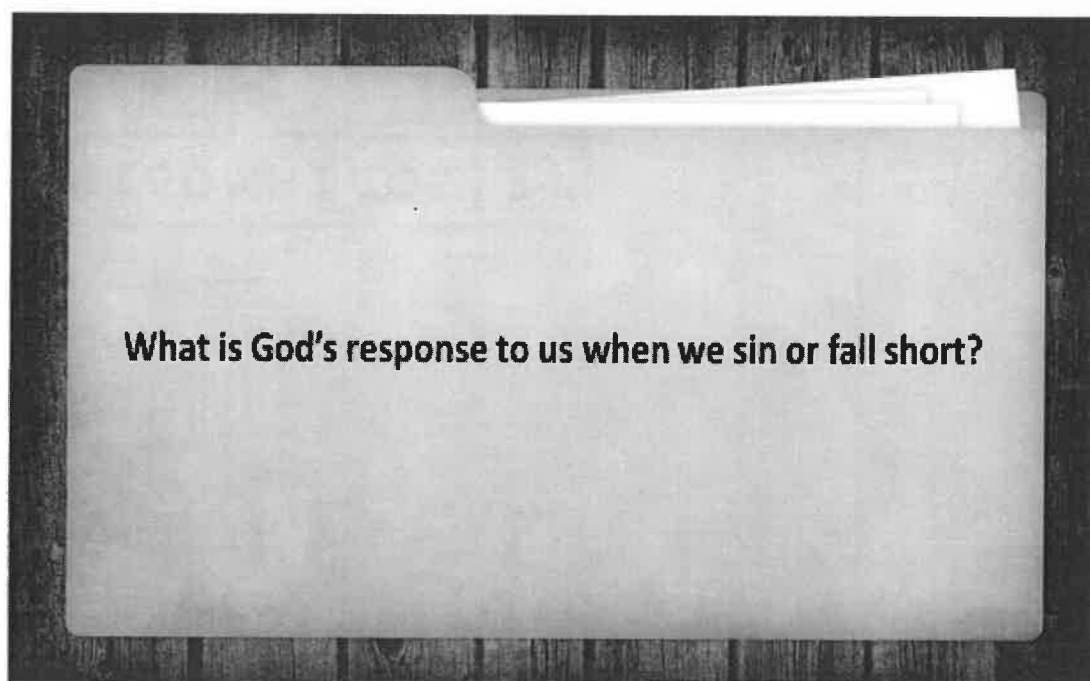
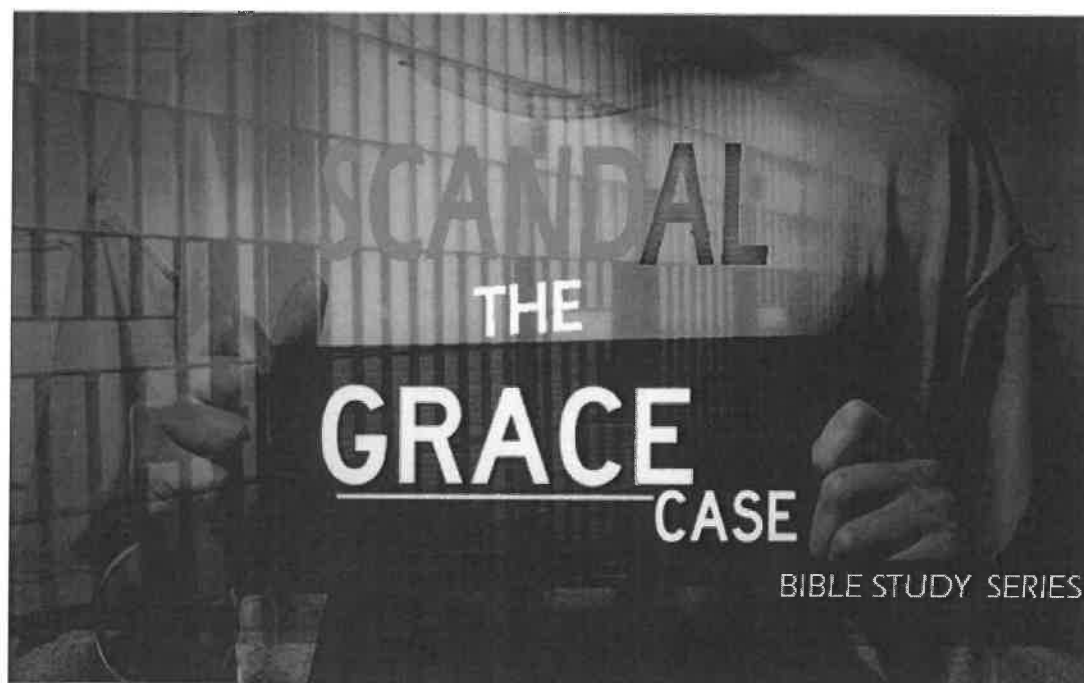
GRACE ICEBREAKER

The Worship group will be broken into smaller groups. As a group discuss the various questions. Once you have completed the task, each group will be responsible for presenting to the other groups what you discussed.

- What is grace?
- Why does grace matter?
- Do you see Christian community as agents of grace or are we more often conduits of gracelessness? Explain.
- Describe a time when you were a recipient of grace.
- Describe a time when you felt grace was withheld from you.
- Describe a time when you withheld grace from someone else.

Video Clip: Scandal Season 3 Episode 14, 20:09 - 25:01

APPENDIX F
BIBLE STUDY



Grace

The word grace simply means God's unmerited favor or His undeserved pleasure.

Ephesians 2:1-10 Tells of the Story of humanity.

Fall - Redemption - Future

Ephesians 2:4-7

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

If God seeks to show us show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, Why do some fear that God will reject them or that they have wondered too far to come back to God?

Ephesians 2:8

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

If grace is a gift, why do we so often try to act as if we are trying to earn God's it?

Why be good if we know in advance we will be forgiven?

Why strive to be Just As God Wants when He accepts me Just AS I Am?

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

What does a Christian created for good works look like?

Created for Good Works

Paul talks about how we used to “walk” in sin, following the “course of the world.” Now we “walk” in good works God has set before us. Ephesians 2: 10 continues that we have been created in Christ Jesus “for good works.” Good works are never the ground or cause of our salvation, but the “goal of the new creation” which springs from our love of God.

Walk in Grace...

Grace Empowers the Believer

Our Christian identity: “By the grace of God I am what I am.” 1 Cor. 15: 10

Our standing before God: “. . . this grace in which we stand.” Rom. 5: 2

Our behavior: “We behaved in the world . . . by the grace of God.” 2 Cor. 1: 12

Walk in Grace...

Grace Empowers the Believer

Our living: those who receive "the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ," Rom. 5: 17. by the "grace of life."

1 Pet. 3: 7.

Our holiness: God "called us to a holy calling . . . because of his own purpose and grace." 2 Tim. 1: 9

Walk in Grace...

Grace Empowers the Believer

Our serving: "Serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." 1 Pet. 4: 10.

Our sufficiency: "My grace is sufficient for you." 2 Cor. 12: 9
"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." 2 Cor. 9: 8

Walk in Grace...

Grace Empowers the Believer

Our response to difficulty and suffering: We get "grace to help in time of need," Heb. 4: 16. and when "you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace . . . will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." 1 Pet. 5: 10

Walk in Grace...

Grace Empowers the Believer

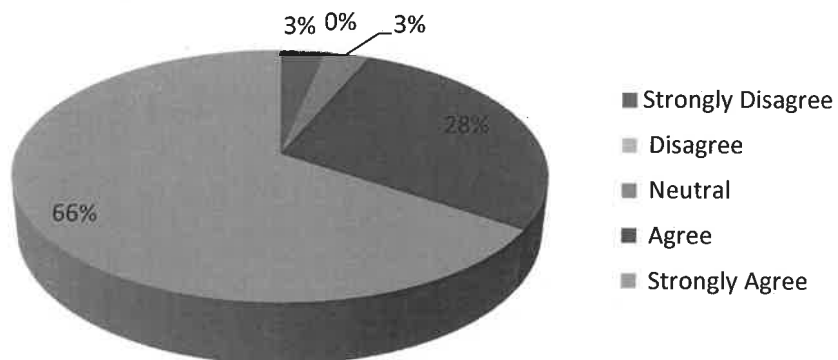
Our participation in God's mission: As recipients of grace we are privileged to serve as agents of grace. Believers receive grace, Acts 11: 23 are encouraged to continue in grace, Acts 13: 43 and are called to testify to the grace of God. Acts 20: 24. In John 20: 21 Jesus says, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." God's mission is to the entire world.

Walk in Grace...**Grace Empowers the Believer**

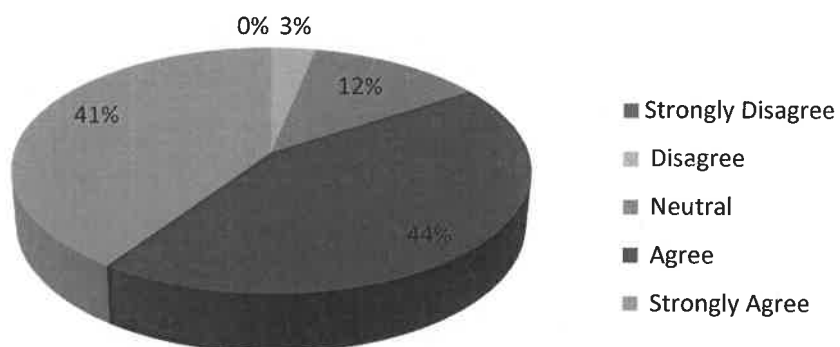
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APPENDIX G
SURVEY TABLES

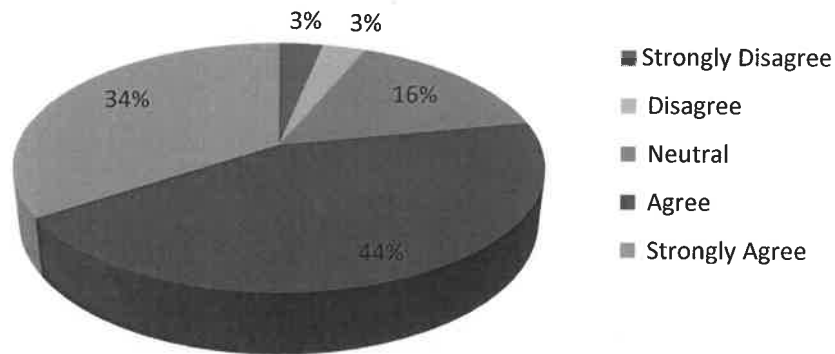
The Church is relevant.



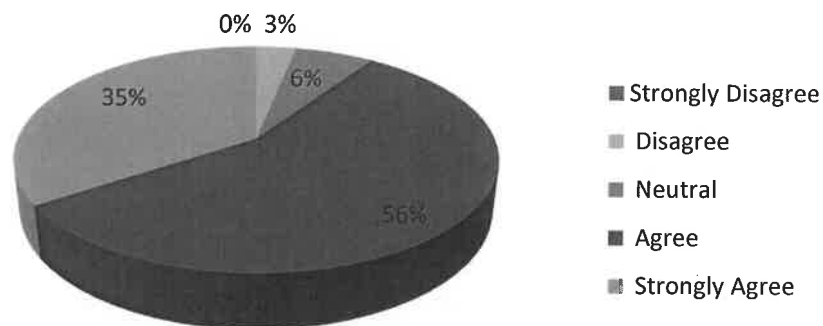
SWAGG is relevant



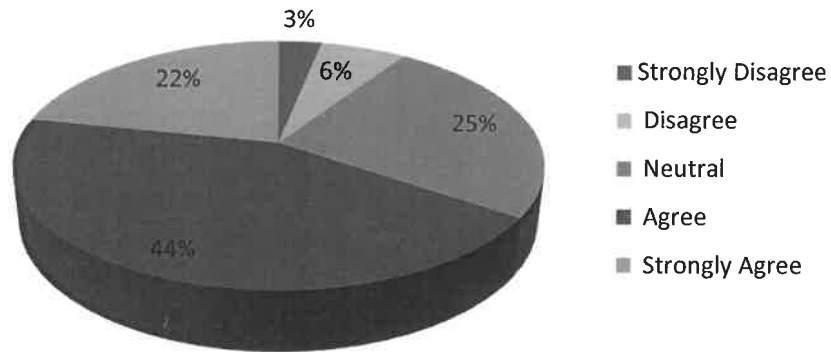
**The Church offers a place where I
can serve and make a contribution.**



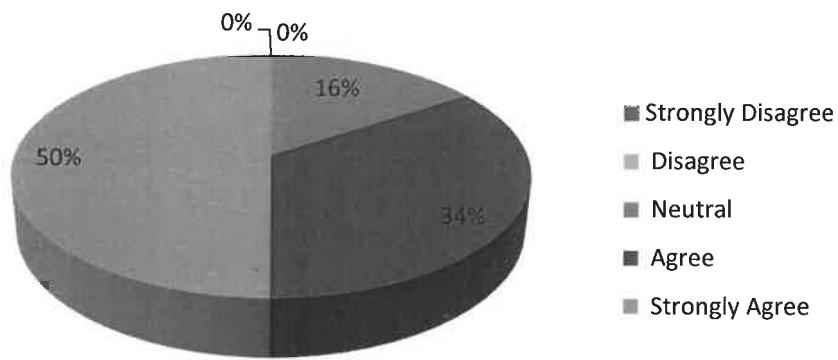
**SWAGG offered a place where I can
serve and make a contribution to
the church.**



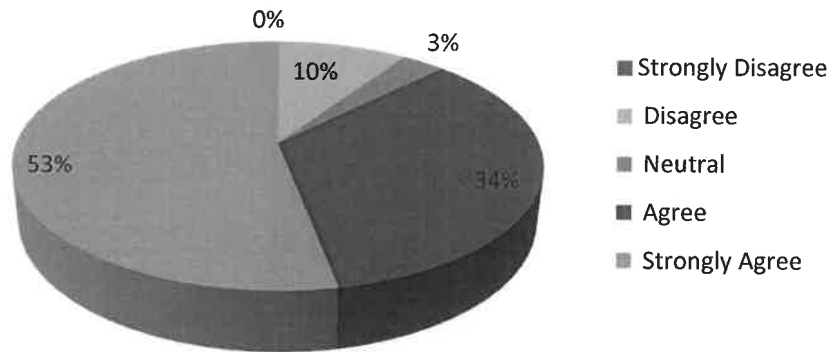
The Church makes a concerted effort to reach out to my age group.



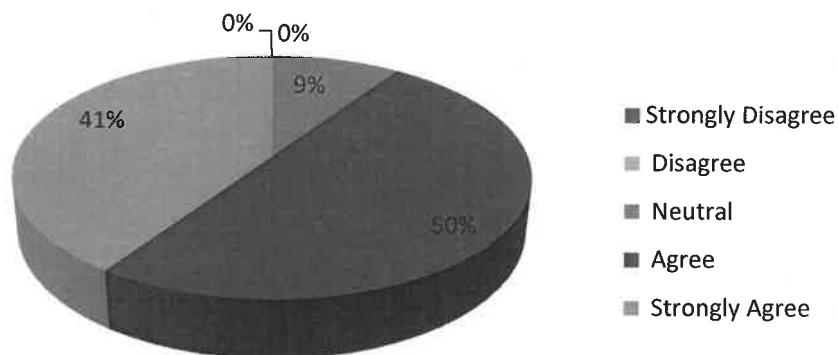
SWAGG makes a concerted effort to reach out to my age group.



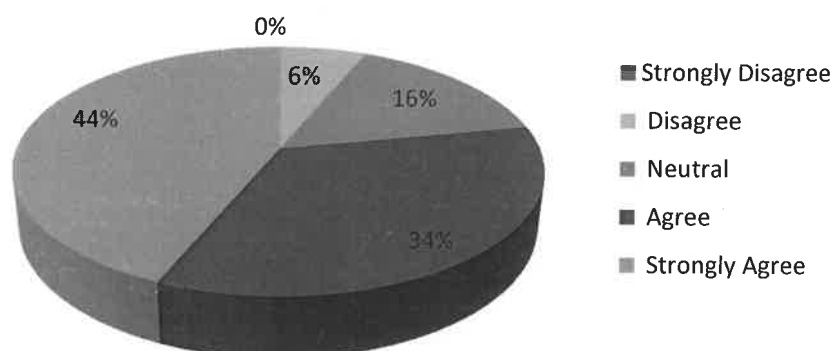
I make an effort to go to church on a regular basis.



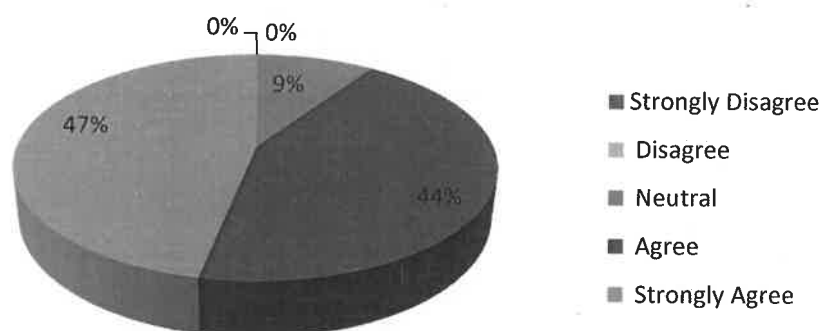
I am willing to attend SWAGG on a regular basis.



I have developed meaningful relationships in church.



SWAGG offers an opportunity for me to develop meaningful relationships.



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